Dimple Dallas

Amy E. Blanchard

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A Merry Xmas

From

Gracie Peterson

Dec. 24, 1929

DIMPLE DALLAS

BY

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TO

GWENYTH WAUGH

WELL BELOVED FOR HER OWN SAKE, AND FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE WHOSE NAME SHE BEARS

A. E. B.

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Dimple Dallas

CHAPTER I

The New Scholar

THE schoolroom was very quiet except for the whisperings from many rosy lips as the children studied their lessons. Presently Miss Reese tapped the bell and immediately there was more of a commotion as sundry small skirts switched out from between the desks and several little girls took their places in class. Among them was one with fair hair who turned very red when a question was put to her by the teacher. It was Eleanor Dallas' first day in school and she was painfully shy at having to recite before others, for she had always been taught at home, and having no brothers and sisters, she felt that in the presence of twenty or more other girls that it

would be impossible for her to remember how to spell *parallel* or *separate* or *conscience*, and she spoke so low when Miss Reese asked her a word that she could scarcely be heard.

"A little louder, my dear," said Miss Reese; "I cannot hear you." And then, with all the girls looking at her, and, with a growing uncertainty as to whether impartial were spelled with a *t* or a *c*, she could not say anything.

A titter ran around the class and poor Eleanor was in a state of abject misery. Miss Reese, however, said kindly, "Never mind, Eleanor, I will excuse you from recitations this first day, and give you a little examination after school."

"She's going to be kept in," whispered Laura Field to the girl next to her, and the words reached Eleanor's ears. She had heard of girls being kept in, and to think the disgrace had fallen upon her this first day. It was almost more than she could bear, and she sat for the rest of the period with downcast eyes to hide the tears which would keep welling up.

Recitations over, the girls flaunted out of the room with many backward glances directed toward the place where Eleanor was sitting with

such a miserable little face that Miss Reese, looking up and seeing the trembling lips, felt that something out of the common must be the matter. "Come here, dear," she said. "Are you not feeling well?"

"Yes, Miss Reese," faltered Eleanor.

"I hope none of the girls have been unkind to you. The first day at school is always a trying one. I remember well enough how I felt when I was a little girl. Very much as you do, I fancy." She put her arm around the child and drew her close to her side. "Now," she said, "I will go over to-morrow's lessons with you. Your mamma has told me something of your methods of study, and since you have been using different books from these, it will be better for me to give you some idea of what we are going to do. There, now, these are your nice fresh new books. Shall I put your name in them?"

"If you please," responded Eleanor, quite interested and beginning to forget her shyness. This being kept in wasn't so dreadful after all.

Miss Reese went over all the next day's lessons and as she closed the last book a little negro girl appeared at the door. "Miss Dimple, yo'

ma say, what de reason yuh ain't come home?" she said.

"I was kept in," said Eleanor rather shamefacedly.

Miss Reese laughed. "Why, my child, no you were not, at least not with the general intention that kept in means. I simply wanted to have you stay that I might go over the lessons with you. Did you think I meant it for punishment, you poor little girl?"

Eleanor looked up shyly. "I did think so," she answered. "One of the girls——" She stopped short. Her Cousin Florence had told her that it was very, very mean to tell tales about the girls, and that when she went to school she must never do it, or else the girls would dislike her.

Miss Reese noticed the sudden pause and with tact did not pursue the subject. "Now run along," she said. "To-morrow I hope you will have good recitations, and you mustn't be afraid to speak above a whisper."

True enough, the next day Eleanor was so sure of her *tions* and her *sions* that she did not miss a single word, and, moreover, she made friends

with two of the nicest girls who invited her to come to their own special corner to eat luncheon with them, and in a few days she felt quite at her ease. She had known several of the girls before she entered school and before long she had entirely overcome her shyness of the others. But many of the experiences were novel, especially those which occurred in the big schoolroom where the whole school assembled to take part in the physical exercises, to listen to lectures or to view certain experiments in physics. Eleanor never forgot her first experience when the subject of electricity was before the school, and she was invited to stand upon a board set upon four tumblers, and after a contact with the electrical apparatus found her hair slowly rising on end. Seeing her startled look one of her best friends among the larger girls, Hattie Spear, dropped on her knees and held out her arms. Eleanor threw herself into them and at the same moment Hattie gave her a kiss, then she gave a little scream and the girls all laughed, for Eleanor had given her friend an electric shock.

It took Mr. Dallas some time to explain the matter to his little daughter that evening, and

she watched for the next thunderstorm with much interest, for she wanted to show off all this knowledge to Bubbles. "You know it's electricity that makes the lightning," she told her.

"Law, Miss Dimple, how you know that?" returned Bubbles.

"Papa told me. Just think, Bubbles, it is the same thing that makes the light burn in the electric lamps."

"Is dat so?" Bubbles raised her hands and appeared to be much impressed. Then after some moments given to thought, she said, "What you say de name of de man what makes de street lights, and de lightnin'? Mr. Elick Cristy? Whar he live?"

Eleanor looked at her quite puzzled, and then she laughed, but she did not offer any explanation, for at that moment her mother called her. But after that Bubbles always spoke of Mr. Elick Cristy's lights out on the street corner.

Eleanor's pet name at home was Dimple, but Mrs. Dallas felt that there was danger of her little daughter's becoming altogether known by it, and had asked Miss Reese to call her Eleanor. Dimple felt that this was a step toward young

ladyhood, and was very particular to instruct Bubbles to call her Miss Eleanor upon every occasion. But Bubbles would forget and upon the very first rainy day appeared at school with an umbrella for "Miss Dimple."

"That's a funny little colored girl," said one of Eleanor's schoolmates. "I've seen her often but I never knew that she lived at your house."

"She has lived with us ever since I was a baby. She is quite a nice child," returned Eleanor in a dignified little way. "Come here, Bubbles, and put on my waterproof."

"Miss Dimple, yo' ma give me a ribbon fo' Floridy Alabamy, dis mawnin', an' she got one fo' you too," said Bubbles in a confidential tone.

"Has she?" returned Dimple indifferently. "You may carry my books, Bubbles. I am going to walk with Janet." Bubbles took the books and trotted along obediently behind the two girls. Janet was a new arrival in town and being lately entered at school Eleanor had a fellow feeling for her.

"Do you ever play with her?" asked Janet. "And she calls you Dimple; what does she do that for?"

"They call me that at home, and, yes, I play with her sometimes."

"Oh, do you?" said Janet looking surprised. "I believe I'll call you Dimple," she added.

"No, please don't. Mamma doesn't want any one to, because she says when I grow up it will sound ridiculous."

"All right, then I won't," Janet returned. "I wish you would come over to my house this afternoon."

"Oh, no, you come to mine. We can play out in my little house in the garden, even if it does rain."

"Have you a little playhouse?"

"Yes, one all my own. Papa had it built for me."

Janet was much impressed. "I'll come," she said. And the two little girls parted to meet an hour later.

It was Friday afternoon, and there were no lessons to be studied, and therefore Eleanor counted on having a fine time. "Mamma," she said, as she entered the house, "I have a new friend, at least I haven't known her very long and she has never been to see me, but she is com-

ing this afternoon. Her name is Janet Forrester. She lives in that yellow house on Main Street, you know, the one by the church."

"Yes, I know."

"She hasn't been living in town very long, and that's why she doesn't know many people. Do you know her mother?"

"Only slightly. I have called upon her. I hope Janet is a good little girl, and one that is proper for you to associate with."

"Oh yes, she is. She wears lovely clothes, and her father keeps a carriage."

Mrs. Dallas smiled. "I don't think we can judge by either of those things. You would better play in your own little house, for your papa has come home feeling far from well, and I should like to keep the house quiet."

Eleanor looked distressed. "Oh, mamma, is he very ill? Will he have to have a doctor?"

"He will see Doctor Sullivan, but I hope he is not very ill. When your little friend has gone, come and tell me about your afternoon together, but try not to disturb me while I am with papa."

Eleanor promised, and then went down to her playhouse in the garden. It was a pretty place,

and the little girl was justly proud of it. She spent much time there, and here she kept her toys, her favorite books and dolls, and here she most frequently entertained her little friends.

It was not long before Bubbles showed Janet into the room. Bubbles, too, was very proud of Miss Dimple's playhouse, and she had quite a grand air as she ushered this new acquaintance into the presence of the owner of the house, saying: "Company, Miss Dimple."

Janet looked around with a critical air, and was immediately seized with a feeling of envy. "It's a right nice little house," she said loftily, "but it isn't as big as the one I had at home in Hartford; and I had real lace curtains to my windows, and Turkey rugs on the floor. Oh, there's only one room, isn't there? My house had two. Do you keep your horse and carriage in that stable, I see out there?"

"No," Eleanor was obliged to confess. "We haven't any horse and carriage. We keep a cow and chickens, though."

"I had a pony and a little cart of my own," said Janet grandly. "How many dolls have you?"

"Six, I think."

"I have twenty. You're not going to let that nigger girl stay in here with us, are you?"

"Why, yes. She often used to play with my Cousin Florence and me."

"My mother doesn't let me play with servants," said Janet with a little haughty air.

Bubbles looked much crestfallen, but immediately retired when Eleanor said: "You needn't stay, Bubbles."

"Now, what shall we play?" said Eleanor, left alone with her guest and intent upon pleasing her.

"We'll pretend we are countesses or duchesses or something. No I choose to be a duchess, and you can be a countess. I'm company and I must be the finest lady. Duchesses are more important than countesses."

Eleanor didn't think this was very polite, but she yielded, and, furthermore, gave up her best doll to her guest. "My best doll is bigger than this," Janet remarked, "and she has a real gold chain to wear around her neck. Haven't you more than one silk dress for yours? All my dolls' dresses are silk. I think a duchess's child

ought to be dressed in silk. I will have to pretend her clothes are much finer than they really are."

They played quite happily for a time, although Eleanor did not quite like the giving up of all her choicest things to her visitor, but she had been taught that her guests must always have the best of everything and she made no objections. It was toward the latter part of the afternoon that Janet suddenly exclaimed: "Oh, where is my pearl ring? It's gone."

"Really?" said Eleanor.

"Yes, I believe that servant girl, you call Bubbles, has stolen it."

"Oh, no, she couldn't have done that," Eleanor protested quite shocked. "Not if you had it on when you came in here, and besides she wouldn't do such a thing."

"I don't know about that; anyhow, I had it on when I left home."

"Perhaps you dropped it somewhere. Let's look for it; you see it has stopped raining." But no amount of searching revealed the ring, and Janet repeated her charges against Bubbles.

"I'm just going to hunt her up, and tell her

she's got it, and I'll make her give it back to me," she said.

"Oh, no, please," begged Eleanor; "I know she wouldn't take it."

"Just tell me this then. Has she never taken anything in all her life?"

Eleanor hesitated. Once Bubbles had possessed herself of some scraps which she coveted for doll clothes, but her offence had never been repeated, and Mrs. Dallas trusted her implicitly. "I know she hasn't taken it," repeated Eleanor, much distressed.

"You're just trying to shield her," said Janet. "I'm going home and get my father to send a police officer after her; that's what I'm going to do." And she flounced out leaving Eleanor in tears. Such a dreadful threat and poor Bubbles; perhaps she would have to go to prison. Eleanor's soft little heart was wrung at the thought, and she rushed up to the house to find her mother and pour the doleful tale in her ears.

CHAPTER II

Changes

MRS. DALLAS greeted Eleanor's tempestuous entrance with, "Softly, dear, you know papa is not well." Eleanor lowered her excited tones and poured forth her grievance, Mrs. Dallas listening quietly. At the close of the recital she said: "I am sorry, my child, that it has happened, and from what you tell me, I do not think Janet will prove to be just the kind of a friend you would prefer. I think the best plan will be for me to send a note to Mrs. Forrester and tell her that we will use every means to find the ring, and ask her to let us know if it is discovered at her own home."

"Please don't let Bubbles take the note."

"No, I will not. I am going to send a prescription to the drug store, and the note can be taken at the same time, but if Bubbles does not take it, I think you will have to."

"O, mamma, I don't want to. Can't Sylvy go?"

"I cannot spare her."

Eleanor was silent for a moment. She did not want to subject Bubbles to a possible wordy attack from Janet, and yet she dreaded seeing her late companion again. But her loyalty to Bubbles at last overcame all other feeling, and she said: "I don't have to go in, do I, mamma? I can leave the note at the door?"

"Yes, that will be quite sufficient."

"Then I will go instead of Bubbles."

Her mother smiled. "I thought you would decide it so. I can generally be sure of my little daughter's good heart."

"You don't believe Bubbles took the ring, do you, mamma?"

"No, I think Janet has probably dropped it somewhere."

Eleanor started off on her errand, and after going to the drug store, she went on to deliver the note, and reached the gate just in time to meet Mrs. Forrester coming out with Janet. The two little girls looked at each other in rather an embarrassed way. It was not an agreeable meeting for either of them.

"This is one of your little school friends, isn't

it, Janet?" Mrs. Forrester asked. "Oh, you have a note for me? Wait a minute."

Eleanor would rather have made her escape at once, but she obediently remained while Mrs. Forrester read the note. "Why, I don't know anything about this," said the lady. "What does your mamma mean? What ring is it she mentions?"

"Janet lost a pearl ring at our house," Eleanor answered.

"Did she? I didn't know she had one," said Mrs. Forrester laughing. "That is one of your fairy tales, Janet."

"I did have a pearl ring, and that nigger girl stole it," Janet returned.

Eleanor flushed up. "She means Bubbles, and I know she didn't steal it."

"You are a silly little creature, Janet," said Mrs. Forrester airly. "Where did you get your valuable ring?"

"I bought it for five cents."

Mrs. Forrester laughed again. "So precious it must have been. Here, take this five cents and go buy another, and that will end the matter."

"I don't want another, I want that one."

"You spoiled child, I don't believe you did lose it, you just wanted me to give you the nickel." She turned to Eleanor. "Don't pay any more attention to it, my child," she said. "It is really of no consequence."

"Her name is Dimple," broke in Janet.

"My name is Eleanor," maintained the other, sturdily.

"It's of no consequence, Dimple," Mrs. Forrester said. "You can tell your mother that Janet has her ring."

"But she hasn't," said Eleanor in surprise.

"She will have as soon as we can go to the shop and get it."

This sort of reasoning was quite new to Eleanor, and she stood stock still puzzling over it. While she stood thus a housemaid came out with something in her hand. "You left this in the sitting-room on the windowsill," she said to Janet, holding out a little trumpery ring. Janet shot one look at Eleanor, and Eleanor with a dignified "Good-evening," turned away thoroughly disgusted with this new acquaintance, and it is safe to say that Bubbles was immedi-

ately informed of the finding of the ring, and was, moreover, told that Eleanor did not intend to play with Janet any more, a fact which pleased Bubbles mightily.

The next few days, however, were very anxious ones for Mrs. Dallas, for her husband was found to have a severe attack of rheumatic fever, and even after he was pronounced better, his recovery was so slow that at last the doctor said he must go away to some famous springs in the far west. The day after this was decided upon, Mrs. Dallas called Eleanor to her. "My little girl," she said, "I am going to ask you to do a very hard thing for papa and me."

Eleanor looked up with wide open blue eyes. "Of course I'll do it, mamma."

"Wait, dear, till you know what it is. You know the doctor says papa must go away; now, I do not feel as if he were well enough to travel that distance alone, besides, in every way it would be better for me to go with him. He is greatly depressed, and if he were to go off alone he would mope and be homesick, and the trip would not do him the good that it ought to. Now, dear, it will be a very expensive journey

and it will not be possible for us to take our little daughter, and besides, now that she is fairly started in school we do not want her to be interrupted, so dear ——"

"Oh mamma!" came with piteous entreaty.

Mrs. Dallas put her arm around the child and drew her close to her. "Darling, you do not know how hard it is going to be for me to leave you."

Eleanor winked away her tears. "Oh mamma, why can't I go to Aunt Eleanor's and go to school with Florence?"

"Because several of your Aunt Eleanor's children have the whooping-cough. Florence was the last to succumb, so a letter from Aunt Eleanor to-day told me, and you know your Uncle Heath and Aunt Dora have gone to California to look after some business there that must be settled up, and Rock will be sent to boarding-school, so you cannot go to them."

"And shall you leave me here all alone?"

"No, indeed; papa and I have talked it over and we have decided to ask Cousin Ellen Murdoch to come here with her family, and remain while we are gone."

"She is the one whose husband died a little while ago and left her with—how many children?"

"Four. Yes, she is the one."

"But, mamma——"

"Well, dear."

"I thought—I didn't know that you were very fond of her."

Mrs. Dallas smiled. "Perhaps I am not so fond of her as I am of some persons."

"Then why do you let her come to your house?"

"Because she needs a change of scene, and it would be a good thing for her if she could come here till her affairs are straightened out. It is not only toward those we like that we should show consideration. We ought not to be so selfish as to entertain only those persons who are agreeable to us. If a person needs our sympathy we ought to offer it in whatever way we can."

"Do you think I ought to entertain Janet?"

"No," answered Mrs. Dallas smiling, "I don't think she needs your consideration; if she were in trouble and you could do her a kindness I think you should do it. Some day you may

have an opportunity of doing some such thing, and then I hope you will not hesitate to do it."

"Mamma."

"Well, dear?"

"Was Cousin Ellen ever hateful to you?"

"You mustn't ask such searching questions, dear child. All you have to do is to make it as pleasant as possible for her while she is here. She has had much trouble and sorrow, but I know she will take excellent care of you, and the rest we must not think about. Sylvy and Bubbles will be here and you will be in your own home."

"But, mamma, I shall miss you so."

"And I shall miss you, my pet." They hugged each other, but when Eleanor felt tears splash down from other eyes than her own she squeezed her mother tighter and said: "Please don't cry, mamma, I will be very good, I will so."

"Thank you for the promise, dear. If papa sees you are bright and cheerful about our going it will make him feel easier, and so will help him to get well the sooner. See what a baby your mamma is. I must not go before papa with such teary eyes."

"With blue eyes trimmed with red," said Eleanor laughing. "Let me go tell him that I don't mind so very, very much, and—oh mamma, is there a baby?"

"You mean among Cousin Ellen's children? Yes, there is a little girl about a year and a half old."

"I shall like that. I love babies." And with this Eleanor left the room to go to her father.

The next few days were full of excitement, for the packing and arranging required Mrs. Dallas' constant attention. Mrs. Murdoch was not to arrive till the evening of the day which saw Mr. and Mrs. Dallas take their departure. Eleanor kept up bravely till she saw the carriage turn the corner and then she sobbed unrestrainedly. It was not only that it wrung her heart to see her father come hobbling on crutches out of the house, but he looked so pale and thin that the thought of being separated from him and from her mother was more than she could bear. Never before did she remember having her mother parted from her for any length of time, certainly a week, at the furthest, was the very longest time that they had ever been away from each other.

Bubbles tried her best to comfort her. "Ne' mind, Miss Dimple," she said. "Yo' pa goin' off on crutches, but terreckly he comin' back 'thout 'em. Yuh don' want him go hippy-hop all he lifetime."

"No," sobbed Eleanor, "of course I don't, but I do wish he hadn't that horrid rheumatism, and I want my mamma, I do, I do. It will be so long before I see her again. I wish I could go, oh, I wish I could go!" she sobbed afresh.

Bubbles clasped her knees entreatingly, the tears rolling down her own cheeks in sympathy. "Miss Dimple, ef yuh cries that-a-way, I git so miserble I won't know what to do," she said.

"I'm miserable," said Eleanor. "I wish Florence didn't have the whooping-cough, then I could go to Aunt Eleanor's." Then suddenly she thought of Rock Hardy, who this year was at boarding-school. That must be worse than being left in one's own home, and she began thinking so hard about him that the tears ceased to flow, and, although it was a very mournful little face which was seen about the house for the next hour, no more tears were shed that afternoon.

Mrs. Dallas had suggested that Eleanor should

go with Bubbles to the train to meet her relatives, and about five o'clock they started down to the railroad station. "I don't like to see the cars," said Eleanor; "they make me think of mamma and papa; they are traveling on and on, and every minute takes them further away." But at this moment the train came in sight and in watching for the newcomers Eleanor for the moment, forgot her griefs.

"There they are, Bubbles," she cried. "I am sure that lady in black is Cousin Ellen, and there are the two little girls and the boy. Where is the baby, I wonder. Oh, the conductor is lifting her down. She can walk, you see, for he has set her down on the platform." She went forward rather timidly, saying, "I am Eleanor Dallas, and this is Bubbles. You are Cousin Ellen, aren't you? Shall Bubbles carry the baby?"

Mrs. Murdoch assented. "I shall be glad if some one will take charge of her. I am tired to death. Here, Donald, take these checks and find an expressman to take the trunks. Eleanor will show you where to go. Come, Olive, come, Jessie, we can go on."

Thrust thus suddenly into the company of a

strange boy, Eleanor had nothing to say for some minutes. She was not used to boys, and, as a rule, avoided them. The one before her was not specially attractive, she thought, but after a while she found her voice and said: "Here is the place."

Donald threw down the checks. "Where are the trunks to go? What is your number?" he asked Eleanor curtly.

She told him and when the address was given they went on, Donald striding along with his hands in his pockets and vouchsafing no reply to Eleanor's "we go this way."

"Do we have to walk? Aren't there any electric cars?" he asked when they had turned the first corner.

"Yes, but it isn't very far, and the cars don't go by our house," Eleanor told him.

"'Tisn't much of a place, is it?"

"It isn't a real big city, of course. Did you think it was?"

"No, but you needn't be so smart."

Eleanor wondered wherein she had shown her special smartness, and made up her mind, then and there, that this boy was not going to be any

company for her. He was about nine years old, but assumed the manner of a boy older. The two girls seemed to be about six and eleven.

Eleanor was glad when they reached home; the others had already arrived. It gave the child a pang to see Mrs. Murdoch established in her mother's room, although it seemed perfectly proper that the girls should occupy the guest chamber. A little room back of it was set apart for Donald.

"Say, mamma, I don't like that room," he said on seeing it. "I want one next to you. Isn't there one there?"

"Yes, but it is Eleanor's room."

"Well, I don't care. I always have a room next to you. Her mother isn't here and she won't care."

"You will be next to your sisters," said Mrs. Murdoch.

"I don't want to be next to a pair of giggling girls. I want to be next to you, so I can call you if I have earache or anything."

Mrs. Murdoch looked uncertainly at Eleanor. "Perhaps Eleanor would just as lief be next the girls," she said.

"Mamma said I was to keep my own room," returned Eleanor with rising color. "It has always been my room since I had one."

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Murdoch. "We'll see about it after a while, Donald." But Donald's black looks did not add to Eleanor's serenity, and she felt that every mouthful of supper would choke her although Sylvy had prepared a specially appetizing meal.

CHAPTER III

Trouble With Donald

ELEANOR soon found that her favorite among the Murdoch children would prove to be Jessie. Olive, the eldest girl, was not a very pleasant child, being "touchy," critical, prim, and absorbed in herself. She was fond of reading, but did not enter very heartily into the plays which entertained Eleanor and Jessie. Mrs. Murdoch was a careful housekeeper, and also a careful mother but a very indulgent one, and although she attended most conscientiously to all of Eleanor's creature comforts she did not give her any of the tenderness which she lavished upon her own children, and very soon Eleanor came to feel like an outsider in her own home.

Her refusal to give up her room to Donald won her that spoiled youngster's ill-will, and he never lost an opportunity of teasing her, to Bubbles' great distress, so that finally there was open warfare between the boy and the little colored girl.

To Bubbles was given the care of the little baby, Alma, and Eleanor was seldom allowed to have any of her old-time plays with the little nursemaid. "You have Jessie and Olive now to play with," her Cousin Ellen told her, "and I can find other things for Barbara to do." Cousin Ellen was very precise in some matters and she considered the name which Eleanor in her baby days had bestowed upon the small negro girl as a ridiculous one, she therefore called her Barbara. At first Bubbles declined to respond to this, but she soon found that she must. Sylvy took her leave shortly after Mrs. Murdoch's arrival, declaring that she would not come back till Mrs. Dallas returned. "I don't like nobody al'ays fussin' roun' my kitchen," she said, "an' I wants to res' up, anyway."

Therefore another woman was installed in Sylvy's place and Eleanor was never allowed to go into the kitchen to make patty-cakes or to help Bubbles in order that she might the sooner get through her work and come out to play with her beloved Miss Dimple.

Nevertheless, Bubbles was permitted to take little Alma down to the playhouse, on occasions,

and many a good time Eleanor promised herself there, for this was specially her own, and if she wanted a quiet place of retreat she could always go there.

But one Saturday morning when she was skipping down to her little house, she was surprised to see Donald busily engaged in carrying her toys out on the small porch, and depositing them there. She stood still in amazement, and then cried out sharply, "What are you doing, Donald? Let my things alone."

"I'm not hurting your old things," Donald returned. "I'm putting them down carefully enough, silly dolls and trash as they are."

"They are not trash, and I'll thank you to put them back again."

"I'm not going to do anything of the kind; I'm going to have this for my house while I'm here."

"Where did you get the key?"

"From where it belongs, on the nail behind the dining-room door."

Eleanor was aghast, then, with a lump in her throat, which threatened every moment to be followed by a flood of tears from her eyes, she

ran back to the house, and hunted up Mrs. Murdoch. "Oh, Cousin Ellen," she cried in a tumult, "Donald is taking all my toys out of my playhouse. Please, won't you make him stop?"

Mrs. Murdoch put down her piece of sewing very deliberately. "Donald asked me if he could have the use of the playhouse," she said. "I never allow him to play in the street, and his room is so small that he cannot enjoy playing there, and there is no room that can be spared for a play room in the house, besides, if there were it would be much better to let him play out there in the garden where he can make all the noise he chooses."

"But," said Eleanor, the tears beginning to rise, "that is my owny-doney house. Papa had it built e'spressly for me. It's my own, my very own, and I don't want Donald to have it. I should think he could play in the garden and the wood-shed and in such places as the other boys in the town do."

Here spoke up Olive. "I think you are very selfish. Don't you, mamma? I always give up to Donald when mamma asks me to, don't I, mamma?"

"I don't care; he is your brother and that is different," replied Eleanor.

"All the more that he is not your brother," returned Olive. "I don't think you are a bit generous about your things when Donald is a stranger here, too, and he doesn't know near so many people as you do. Mamma said that if he got acquainted with one or two nice boys that she would allow him to have them here to play if they could play in the playhouse."

Poor Eleanor looked the picture of distress. To be accused of selfishness and to be robbed of her dearly loved place of refuge, that was too much to stand, and she turned from the room without a word, scarcely hearing Mrs. Murdoch's words: "You can have Barbara, for a little while to help you move your toys. Olive will be kind enough to give a portion of her time to the baby, I am sure. Go, Olive, and tell Barbara to help Miss Eleanor to carry in her things. Your room will be quite large enough to hold them, Eleanor."

By this time Eleanor had fled to the garret and there Bubbles found her, after some searching, crying as if her heart would break. "He stole

my key, Bubbles, he did, and he's moving everything out of my dear house, and —— Oh, I wish mamma would come home. Nobody loves me here. I want my own mamma." Bubbles was the picture of distress, she possessed herself of one of Eleanor's hands; patting and stroking it, she begged the unhappy child not to cry, comforting her as best she could, so that after a while Eleanor, with a great sigh, stopped her sobbing and said: "I suppose I am very selfish, for mamma gave up her house to Cousin Ellen, and I ought to give up mine to Donald. Come, Bubbles, let's move the things, but I hate Donald; I just can't bear him."

They proceeded to the garden where Donald was still busy setting dolls and dishes outside the little house. Without a word Eleanor and Bubbles began picking up the things to carry them to the house. "You can just leave the books and pictures," said Donald, condescendingly. "I don't mind having them there. Most of the books are girl books, but some of them, those fairy tales and things like that, I can read."

"I shall not leave one single thing," said Eleanor shortly.

"You're a mean, selfish girl," retorted Donald, and catching sight of her swollen cheeks and red eyelids, he added: "Cry-baby, cry-baby, had to give up your house whether you wanted to or not, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't," returned Eleanor fiercely. "I gave it up because my mother was kind enough to give up her house to your mother when she didn't have anywhere else to go, and I am doing the same, but I wish my Cousin Rock were here to fight you. I'd fight you myself if I were a boy, and I wish my father would whip you till you couldn't see."

In a transport of rage Donald picked up one of Eleanor's dolls and hurled it to the ground, and then sprang at Eleanor. But Bubbles interfered between them and received the blow; then she caught the boy by the shoulders and shook him with all her might, and being a strong little creature, she managed to throw him down and began to pound him while he shouted lustily: "Mamma! Olive! Come quick! They're murdering me!"

His yells brought Mrs. Murdoch in great excitement. "Eleanor! Barbara! Stop!" she

said in stern tones. "My poor boy, what are they doing to you?"

"They set upon me just because I wanted the house to play in," said Donald, scrambling to his feet, more dusty than hurt.

"Oh," cried Eleanor, "it wasn't that at all, it was because you broke my doll and tried to strike me."

"No, it wasn't, mamma," protested Donald, "they were just mad, and I didn't break the doll on purpose; it slipped out of my hand. Why didn't Eleanor come and take out her old things herself? Here I was trying to help her, and that's all the thanks I get."

Such a statement of the case amazed Eleanor, but no matter how she tried to protest, Donald was ready with his excuses, and to his tale alone would his mother listen, so that Eleanor and Bubbles were marched back to the house in disgrace, Mrs. Murdock declaring that she would not have such a desperate character as Bubbles in the house and that she must be sent away. "I cannot imagine how Cousin Florence could keep such a creature, a perfect savage," said Mrs. Murdoch, "and as for you, Eleanor, you are a

very bad example to my children: ill-tempered, untruthful, selfish; I am almost tempted to write to your mother and tell her that I will give up the house altogether, and go back to the city, for even poor rooms would be better than a spot where my children are in danger. I cannot stand such scenes. Perhaps, however, if we can remove the evil influence of that colored girl we can get along. I will see at once about her going."

At this Bubbles burst into loud weeping, and implored Mrs. Murdoch not to send her away, reiterating that she was only standing up for Miss Dimple, and that no boy had any right to hit a girl; to all of which Mrs. Murdoch was deaf, and both Bubbles and Eleanor were sent to their respective rooms in a very desperate state of mind.

From her window Eleanor could see her little house bereft of her toys. These lay on the ground outside, and Eleanor wondered whether they would still be allowed to remain there in case of rain. She stood looking wistfully out when she heard a queer noise from the garret window above, and leaning out with eyes di-

rected to the window, she saw Bubbles making mysterious signs.

Eleanor hesitated for a moment, and then stole into the entry and up the stairs to the garret. "What are you doing up here, Bubbles?" she asked in a whisper.

"I jus' a-tryin' to git a-holt o' yuh, Miss Dimple. I gwine run away."

"Oh, Bubbles, please don't."

"Yass, m', I is. I ain't gwine let nobody boss me an' call me story-teller an' all kin' o' names."

"Oh, but Bubbles, where will you go?"

"I gwine to Sylvy. She let me come. She res'n up, yuh knows. She at her father's house in de country."

"But that is, oh, ever so far?"

"Yass, miss."

"Do you know the way there?"

"No, m', but the butterman, he do. Sylvy live jes' noways fum his house, an' when he come I gwine ax him will he tek me."

"Oh, Bubbles, and I will be left all alone."

Bubbles looked distressed. "She gwine sen' me off, anyway."

"I'll beg her not to. She has no right to do it."

"Dat don' do no good. She kaint see nothin' 'cepin' them childern o' hern, an' ef dey lies den it all right, an' ef we speaks truff we ain't all right."

"I wish I could go, too," said Eleanor mournfully. But just then came a voice. "Eleanor, where are you? I forbade your leaving your room."

"You jes' sass her," said Bubbles. "Ef she believe I'm bad, I'm gwine be bad."

And Eleanor answered flippantly, "I'm up here, Cousin Ellen."

"Come down."

"Tell her yuh won't," urged Bubbles.

Eleanor hesitated. "What do you want me for?" she compromised by saying.

"Come down, and I will tell you."

"You are not my mother, I don't have to come," encouraged by Bubbles, she said.

"You are a very bad, impertinent child. Come at once. I want you to go and bring in those toys that are lying out on the ground cluttering up the place."

"I'll do that," said Eleanor, turning to Bubbles. "I'll be there directly," she called to Mrs. Murdoch. "Tell me before we go, Bubbles, when are you going to Sylvy? I won't tell."

"Wednesday, when de butterman comes. I'll sneak out an' tek my bun'le an' git in de wagon."

"He comes in the morning when I am at school, doesn't he?"

"Yass, miss."

"All right, I reckon you'd better do that. I am sorry, but oh, Bubbles, I shall miss you."

Bubbles' fists went up to her eyes and she sat sniffling as Eleanor departed.

The latter went immediately to the garden, taking no notice of Donald, except to make a face at him as she began removing her toys. He answered with a mocking "Cry-baby!" and Eleanor longed with helpless rage to do something to punish him, but she could only toil back and forth from the big house to the little one, carrying her toys, her books, her pictures. The broken doll she took up tenderly looking down upon it with sorrowful eyes. "You were such a pretty little thing," she whispered, "and I did love you so much. Oh, that wicked boy! I'd

like to see how he would feel if some big giant were to dash his brains out on the ground; you poor dear little thing. You were such a nice size to play with, and I could do all sorts of things with you that I can't do with my big dolls."

She was very tired when the last one of her possessions was removed, but she called Jessie and told her that she meant to bury her dear Florence, and Jessie cheerfully acquiesced when asked to attend the funeral. So Florence was buried under a lilac bush, and then Eleanor dragged her tired little legs into the house, feeling as if the clouds were gathering thick and fast over her usually sunny sky.

But when she went up to her room for the last time that evening she found on her table two letters, and both of them brought comfort. One was from her mother. It was full of words of love and bade Eleanor be a good girl and give her cousin no trouble. Her papa was very tired after his journey, but hoped he would begin to improve as soon as he was rested.

The other letter was from Rock Hardy, and among other things it said: "Boarding-school

isn't much like home, and I'm having a pretty tough time, but I'm only telling this to you, for I wouldn't be so mean as to bother mamma about it. I guess I can stand it if the other fellows can." And these words set Eleanor thinking.

CHAPTER IV

A New Doll

MRS. MURDOCH was very cool to Eleanor after this, and Olive followed suit, while Donald did everything in his power to annoy his cousin. Jessie, however, was too sweet-tempered to make herself disagreeable, and little Alma was too much of a baby to be influenced against any one who was always kind to her and ready to amuse her. Mrs. Murdoch kept Bubbles strictly under her eye, and would not allow her to take Alma out of her sight, a fact which Eleanor resented more than Bubbles did. "As if Bubbles would be cruel to a little baby," she said to Jessie.

"But you know she beat Don dreadfully," Jessie replied.

"She didn't hurt him hardly one bit, and besides, he was going to strike me."

"Well, you know he didn't strike you," returned Jessie, and Eleanor felt helpless to argue the point.

Rock's letter had cheered her and strengthened her. If Rock would not tell his mother that he was having a hard time, neither would she tell her mother about her worries, for she was sure that her dearest mamma had more to trouble her than had Mrs. Heath, Dallas Rock's mother, and the child bore Olive's snubs and Mrs. Murdoch's cold looks with open defiance, but she would not tell any one but Rock; to him she wrote quite a long letter.

"It is so dreadful here now," she wrote. "My little house in the yard is all full of all sorts of stuff, and it is oh, so dirty, for the boys that Don brings in there do just as they please. Cousin Ellen is very partikular about mamma's house, but she don't care what comes of mine. I'me not going to worry mamma, Rock, but I wish you and Florence were here instead of Don and Olive. Jessie is a right nice little girl but she is a good deal littler than I am." These and other things Eleanor wrote to Rock and he answered in kind, so that Eleanor felt that they were comrades in misery as they had been comrades in pleasure the summer before.

It was the day before the butterman made his

appearance, that an express package, addressed to Miss Eleanor Dallas, was left at the door. As it happened Eleanor was in her room when Bubbles came running upstairs saying: "Somepin fo' yuh! Somepin fo' yuh! Miss Dimple. Ain't I glad!"

With eager fingers Eleanor undid the string, uncovered the box and very carefully lifted the soft paper snugly packed around the prettiest little doll just about the size of the one which Donald had so wantonly destroyed. The child's little scream of delight brought Olive and Jessie from the next room, and they were soon all examining this new arrival. The doll wore a pretty traveling dress of grey with hat to match and grey suede shoes. Pinned to her frock was a note which read:

"DEAR DIMPLE:

"I am sending you a little friend of mine who, I hope, will be able to comfort you while your mamma is away. Her name is Ada and she is ready to be loved very much. I should like to have her taught from the books which you will find in her trunk, and I hope you will have no trouble in teaching her to be obedient and attentive. Your very loving

"AUNT DORA."

The note was type-written and was very easy to read.

"Oh, my dear lovely child!" cried Eleanor. "I am so glad you have come. But where is the trunk, Bubbles?"

"Law! I nuver brought it up; I thought hit were fo' somebody e's," and Bubbles skurried downstairs as fast as her legs could take her, coming back in a moment with the trunk in her arms. Eleanor proceeded immediately to open it and found it filled with a most complete little wardrobe: two school dresses, a handsome suit for extra occasions, a fine white frock for parties. Then there were stockings, tiny handkerchiefs, all manner of under-clothing, a set of furs, ribbons, a little hood trimmed with fur, a cunning hat in a small bandbox, and at the very bottom of the trunk were found a slate and several funny little books. Even Olive could not resist many ohs and ahs as one after another of the dainty garments appeared. Aunt Dora had evidently made everything with her own hands and the tiny hems, the neat little seams, so excited the children's admiration that Jessie begged to take them to her mother to look at.

Mrs. Murdock's remark was: "They are very nice, Jessie, but I wish Eleanor were more worthy of such kindness."

Eleanor, hearing the words, retreated to the door of her own room; standing there she retorted: "I am worth Aunt Dora's kindness as much as you are worth my mamma's. She wouldn't treat one of your children the way you do me, and I think when she lets you have her nice house to live in that you might be a little more polite to me."

"Such a want of fine feeling," sighed Mrs. Murdoch. "When you show a sweet and amiable spirit, Eleanor, I shall be ready to give you more affection, but you cannot expect it from those whom you twit and taunt because of their misfortunes."

"My mamma has a trouble, too," returned Eleanor, "and you are making a lot for me. I wish I had never seen you."

"Such a dreadfully spoiled child," sighed Mrs. Murdoch. "I would rather you did not come into my room, Eleanor, since you only stir up strife, and seem to delight in making impertinent speeches."

"You just keep out of my mother's room," said Olive, looking defiance at Eleanor.

With a little choking sob, Eleanor turned and went away, saying only: "It's my mamma's room; my own mamma's room, and I was never turned out of it before."

"Never mind her, Olive," she heard Mrs. Murdoch say. "She is a spoiled, badly-managed child, and you must try to set her a good example. I am grieved to find that Florence is so indulgent and injudicious a mother."

Eleanor hearing, turned in a perfect storm of tears goaded beyond endurance to say, "You shall not say such things about my mother. She is the dearest and best in the world, and I'd like to know where anybody could find such a hateful, spoiled, wicked, wicked child as Donald. And as for Olive, she is a horrid little sneak. I saw her steal cake from the pantry and she told you that Bubbles did it. I don't tell stories and I don't take things without leave."

"Oh, mamma, I didn't," said Olive turning very red, but denying Eleanor's charge with emphasis.

"Don't add falsehood to your other sins,

Eleanor," said Mrs. Murdoch. "Go to your room. Indeed, I wish to do my duty by you, but I cannot have you shield that favorite of yours by telling falsehoods about my children."

Olive whispered something to her, and she nodded in reply while Eleanor walked from the room and threw herself sobbing into Bubbles' arms. "Oh, Bubbles, Bubbles," she cried, "they say I tell stories and it is they who do, and they call me selfish and wicked when it is they who are. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Ne'm mind, Miss Dimple," said Bubbles, soothingly. "'Tain't goneter las' fo'ever, an' yuh jes' go 'long an' don' min' what Miss Murder say." Then she whispered: "Don' min' 'bout me. She ain't a goin' to fin' no place fo' me, an' yuh know I is goin' to Sylvy. Mebbe she won't be so cross when I'm gone. Come, now, le's play with yo' new dolly. My, ain't she pretty with them big eyes an' them rosy cheeks?"

"She is lovely," returned Eleanor, drying her eyes, "and I shall just love her, but I wish I could run away with you, Bubbles."

"Sh!" said Bubbles, for just then Olive entered and said in a prim way: "Mamma says

you are not to stay in here with Eleanor, Barbara. She says you are to go down and set the table for tea, and you are not to stay in Eleanor's room nor even come in here without express permission."

Bubbles arose and obediently went below stairs, but she muttered much to herself and racked her brain for some way in which she could avenge the trials of her beloved Miss Dimple, who, meanwhile was trying to comfort herself with her new doll. A letter from her mother that day had said that Mr. Dallas was not quite so well but that Eleanor was not to worry, for she hoped to have better news the next time she wrote, and she was glad to hear that her little daughter was getting along well at school and that she was well. She must try to be kind and obedient and helpful to her Cousin Ellen.

"I won't, I won't, I won't," whispered Eleanor to herself. "I can't be. She is too hateful to me. I wish I had never seen her and I wish I could stay out of the house all the time." And indeed this is what she tried to do, starting early for school, and trying to spend as much of the afternoon as possible with some of her schoolmates.

Olive had made friends with Janet Forrester, and Jessie had found a playmate nearer her own age, so Eleanor was free to select her own friends. Upon one occasion there came a clash upon this very subject, for Mrs. Murdoch insisted that Eleanor should go to Janet Forrester's to spend the afternoon. "I feel myself responsible for you, Eleanor," she said, "and I should like to know that you are somewhere with Olive that I may be able to account for you."

"Mamma doesn't like me to play with Janet," Eleanor blurted out.

"Why not?"

Eleanor hung her head. She did not like to tell tales, in school or out, but Olive spoke up: "I know, mamma; it's because Barbara stole a ring from Janet and she and Eleanor quarreled about it."

"Oh, what a story," cried Eleanor. "She didn't steal it, any such a thing. Janet said she did just to get Bubbles into trouble and she found the ring afterward at her own house. So there."

Mrs. Murdoch and Olive exchanged glances and Mrs. Murdoch lifted her eyebrows slightly, in a way that Eleanor much disliked.

"That's what Janet told me, anyhow, mamma," said Olive meaningly.

"There are always two sides to a question," said Mrs. Murdoch, "but if you are sure, Eleanor, that your mamma does not like you to play with Janet you needn't go. Mrs. Forrester has doubtless the same objection on her side."

Eleanor looked at her with blazing eyes; then stamping her foot she cried: "I wish you'd just write to mamma and ask her. She will tell you the truth, anyhow, if you don't believe me. I never tell stories. I never do such things. You can ask mamma." And she turned away.

This was on Wednesday before school, and on her return home she found Mrs. Murdoch in quite a perturbed state. "Eleanor," she said, "have you seen anything of Barbara? She hasn't been seen since about eleven o'clock."

"I haven't seen her," returned Eleanor curtly.

"Do you know where she is?"

Eleanor hesitated, then remembered that she did not know just where Sylvy's parents lived; it was somewhere in the country, but where she could not tell.

"Answer me," said Mrs. Murdoch. "Where is she?"

"I don't know, Cousin Ellen, at least, I know she has gone away somewhere in the country, but I don't know where the place is. You said you were going to send her away, and so she went anyhow."

"And you have known this all the time and haven't told me? Such deceit!"

"I don't know why I should have told," retorted Eleanor. "It wouldn't have done Bubbles any good, and I love her a thousand million times more than I do you, if she is black. She is white inside and I know you are not."

"Eleanor!" Mrs. Murdoch spoke very sternly. "You are really the most dreadful child I have ever encountered. I never had any one speak to me as you have done. You are completely contaminated by your association with servants."

"I don't tell stories, and I don't steal from the pantry, and I don't do lots of things your children do," returned Eleanor thoroughly defiant.

"Hush!" cried Mrs. Murdoch. "If it were not for worrying your mother I should tell her very plainly what I think of you, but as it is, my

hands are tied. I shall have to pass over this as I have over many other things. If Barbara has gone I wash my hands of her, and when your mother returns she can do as she thinks fit about the affair. I am not in a position to punish you as you deserve, but I wish you not to address me or any of my family, except when absolutely necessary, while we remain here."

However much Mrs. Murdoch was pleased at Bubbles' departure to Eleanor it was a sore loss, and she went to bed that night clasping her dear Ada close to her heart and shedding many tears for Bubbles. The absence of the little colored girl in more ways than one, made it hard for Eleanor, for now Bubbles could not be used as a scapegoat for Olive's sly pilferings, nor for Don's tricks, and so by degrees it was Eleanor herself upon whom all the blame was laid. Did anything happen to be out place, Eleanor had it last. Were there mud tracked through Mrs. Murdoch's clean halls, Eleanor did it; and, since Mrs. Murdoch's blind idolatry of her children did not permit her to see a fault in any one of them, poor Eleanor was gradually made to believe herself a most wicked person, and she was in danger of

acquiring some of the very qualities which were attributed to her.

It was Miss Reese who first noticed this, for she saw that the child's sunny little face was now habitually clouded and that, whereas she had formerly been responsive to gentle chiding for some slight fault, she was beginning to show open defiance, and so the teacher called upon Mrs. Murdoch and very tactfully brought around the conversation to the subject which was upon her mind.

"You find Olive and Jessie tractable, I hope," said Mrs. Murdoch.

"Yes," returned Miss Reese, "Jessie particularly. I have some times thought that Olive was not as frank as I should like her to be, but I may be mistaken."

Mrs. Murdoch's visible resentment showed Miss Reese that she was upon dangerous ground. "That is a quality that belongs to Eleanor rather than to Olive," Mrs. Murdoch said. "The child has been brought up very unwisely."

"Why, what do you mean?" Miss Reese was surprised into saying. "I have always thought Mrs. Dallas one of the tenderest and most de-

voted of mothers. Every one thinks Eleanor one of the best behaved little girls in town; for myself I think she is a charming child."

"One can never tell unless one lives in the house with such a character," said Mrs. Murdoch, sighing. "Your estimate simply proves what I say that Eleanor is vain and deceitful."

Miss Reese began to take in the situation but she only said:

"I think a teacher has an excellent opportunity for judging of the characters of those placed in her care, and I cannot agree with you, Mrs. Murdoch." Then she took her leave, resolved to give more attention to Eleanor from this out.

CHAPTER V

More Trouble

It was about two weeks after Bubbles' departure that Eleanor, coming home one day from school, found her new doll missing and her precious Jungle Book out of its place on her shelves. She searched high and low but could find neither book nor doll. She gave to her dolls a devoted affection. They seemed real persons to her and any indignity offered to them cut her to the very heart. Once in a while she had forgotten and had left some special member of her family out in the garden all night and her self-reproach upon discovering it was great. It was as if she felt upon her own tender body the dews of night, and as if pangs of hunger had been hers, and after that, for days, the victim of her forgetfulness would be treated with extra care and tenderness.

For her books she had the feeling that is that of every true book-lover. It hurt her to see her

treasured volumes laid face down, or to see thumb-marks soiling one of the clean pages or to come across a leaf turned down; therefore she dreaded to see one of her beloved books in Donald's hands. Donald was no respecter of the property of others, and if he wanted a book he usually helped himself to it and kept it in the playhouse as long as it suited him. He was very tenacious, it may be said, about his right to the playhouse, and always kept the door locked and the key in his pocket when he was not in the small building, so that Eleanor had no opportunity of going in there to search for any of her lost treasures.

She sighed as she thought some day she would probably find her Jungle Book, soiled and with dingy covers, returned to her shelves, but Donald professed to despise dolls and what could he want to do with her dear Ada? She determined to ask him if he had seen her doll, and to be very polite when she did it; so she waited patiently till she should hear him come in.

It was cold November weather and the winter was fast approaching. Eleanor shuddered as she thought of Ada lying somewhere out in the chill

wind, but she said very sweetly, "Donald, have you seen anything of my new doll?"

"What do you suppose I know about your old doll?" he returned.

"I can't find her anywhere," Eleanor went on wistfully. "I left her sitting on my bed this morning, and I have hunted high and low for her."

"You didn't look in the flour barrel, I suppose," said Donald laughing.

"No. Oh, you didn't put her in there, did you? She will smother." And she hurried off to the pantry to examine the contents of the barrel.

Mrs. Murdoch coming saw her there. "Eleanor, what are you doing?" she asked sharply. "You charge Olive with pilfering from my store of cakes and I find you in here. What does this mean?"

"I am only looking for my doll, Cousin Ellen," Eleanor replied, too much worried to notice the implied charges.

"A queer place to look for a doll."

"Donald asked me if I had looked in the flour barrel, and I want so much to find her."

"As if he would put a doll in there. He has better sense than to do such a thing," said Mrs. Murdoch. "Your excuse is a very lame one, Eleanor."

But Eleanor paid little heed to her and again sought Donald, who jeeringly said: "When she's up she's up, and when she's down she's down, and when she's half-way up she's neither up nor down." And that was all Eleanor could get out of him.

Up and downstairs she trudged, looking in every room but no Ada was to be found. All over the garden she searched, but no Ada was there, but at last the child caught sight of something swinging from the garret window, and going closer, she saw Ada clad in her little night-gown and tied by the neck to a string which was suspended from a nail in the eaves. Upstairs Eleanor rushed, feeling as if she could not endure such treatment of her doll. She was in an agony of sympathy for poor Ada, but, try as she would, she could not grasp the string which hung just beyond her reach and could only be touched by standing on the ledge outside the window.

Eleanor was always desperately afraid to stand on high places, but her eagerness to gain possession of her doll, nerved her to climb out and stand upon the sill. She caught the string in one hand and with a dreadful feeling that Ada's body was thumping against the side of the house, she managed to climb in again and drew up the precious burden to find the doll a little scarred, but otherwise unhurt.

The child was now in such a nervous tremor that she felt her limbs shaking under her as she sank down on the garret floor giving vent to quick little sobs. "We won't stand it, Ada; we won't," she said. "We will run away, too. We will go with the butterman and find Sylvy and Bubbles. They love me better than these cousins." She had always been used to having negro servants about her and the idea of going to Sylvy did not affect her as it might have done a child not accustomed to being petted and coddled by a negro nursemaid.

"To-morrow the butterman comes again and we will hide somewhere, Ada, and go with him. I hope Bubbles found Sylvy. I haven't heard a word about her, but I hope she got there all

right. I must write a note to Miss Reese, for she will wonder why I am not at school. I will mail it in the morning." The little inconsequent mind did not see any further troubles arising from her purpose, and she began to make her plans. "I will write to mamma and tell her I did not mean to be bad but that they made me so, and I'll tell her I am safe and that I am going to stay till she comes back," she told her doll. Then she tied up a little bundle of her own clothing, and put in what she considered proper apparel for Ada, and then she wrote her little note to Miss Reese:

"DEAR MISS REESE:

"I can't come to school because I am going away. I'm so miserble without mamma and nobody loves me. Ime not going because I dont like to go to school and plese excuse my lessons I will study very hard when mamma comes back

"Affectionately yours

"ELEANOR DALLAS.

"P.S.—I forgot to tell you ime going to stay with Sylvy and Bubbles."

She decided that she would go to school and at recess she would slip out and be on the corner when the butterman drove by. She would leave

her bundle with old Mrs. Wills who kept a small shop near the school. She felt distressed at leaving her other dolls and Nyxy, her little black cat, but she laid the former carefully away in a drawer, after fondly kissing each smiling face, locked the drawer and took the key with her. Nyxy she knew would be well cared for. Jessie was devoted to him and the cook was fond of cats, and therefore with a soft whisper and a loving pat, Eleanor bade good-bye to her furry pet the next morning and started out alone. She did not often walk to school with her cousins nowadays, for Olive usually stopped for Janet Forrester and Jessie had a friend about her own age who called for her almost every morning, therefore Eleanor was not observed as she stepped out with her bundle and hurried along to Mrs. Wills before the others started.

Mrs. Wills cheerfully took charge of the bundle, patted Eleanor's shoulder and gave her a cocoanut cake. Her little shop was beginning to show Christmas wares and it gave Eleanor a pang to think that perhaps this year there would be no mamma on hand to plan delightful surprises. The tears gathered in her eyes as she

went on to school, stopping to mail her letter to Miss Reese on the way.

She arrived quite early and found the schoolroom empty of every one except her teacher. Miss Reese looked up with a smile. "Good-morning, Eleanor," she said. "This is quite a frosty morning, isn't it? It promises cold weather soon. I suppose you are glad of that, for your mamma thought she would be home by Christmas, I remember."

"I'm afraid she won't be," returned Eleanor. "Papa wasn't so well when she last wrote."

"Oh, that's too bad. Never mind, you can have a good time with your cousins. It must be very lively for you to have so many playmates, after being the only child in the house."

Eleanor did not reply, but there was a quivering of her lips that told Miss Reese more than words could have done. "Did you come to school on your wheel?" Miss Reese asked, changing the subject.

"No, Miss Reese. Don has broken it. I hate Don."

"Why, my child."

"I do. I can't help it if I am wicked and sel-

fish and—and deceitful, I just hate him," she said, going to her desk and hiding her face behind the lid as she raised it that Miss Reese might not see her tears. But just then in came a troop of girls and no more was said, although Miss Reese made a mental note of Eleanor's words.

At recess Eleanor asked permission to go to Mrs. Wills' little shop. This was often accorded the girls and consent was given to the child, who, however, waited till the last moment and then ran out, passing the girls returning from having made their purchases of sour balls or ginger cakes or buns.

"You'd better hurry up," said Laura Field; "the bell will ring in a minute."

Eleanor nodded in reply, and ran on, secured her bundle and hurried around the corner to overtake the butterman. But just as she reached the spot where she intended to wait for him she saw the white top of his wagon ahead of her, and she ran with all her might toward it, calling: "Mr. Snyder, Mr. Snyder, please wait for me," but his sleek brown horses trotted on and the child, breathlessly following, at last, dropped into a walk, but still determined to overtake him.

On and on she went up the hard country road where fewer and fewer houses were to be seen, and at last she saw the wagon turn into a lane, and outside the gate she sat down to wait till the butterman should come out again. She was very warm and tired and a cough which she had noticed for some days, began to trouble her more than before. The cold wind struck her and in a few minutes she was shivering, but she was not the less firm in her determination to go on to find Sylvy.

But as she sat there huddled up she heard a horse's hoofs come clattering along the road and she saw the flash of a scarlet jacket as a tiny Shetland pony came dashing along bearing as his rider a swarthy little girl, whose black tousled hair was tossed about by the wind. She drew rein as she saw Eleanor there and came cantering up to her. "What you doing?" she asked, slipping down from her pony and peering down with her bright eyes into Eleanor's face.

"I'm waiting for the butterman," answered Eleanor shyly.

"Wha' for?"

"'Cause I want him to take me along with him."

"I'll take you. Want to ride my pony? Come; there ain't no man coming."

Eleanor looked up toward the house before the gate of which she was waiting. "He's in there," she said.

The girl shook her black locks. "No, he's gone t'other way."

Eleanor looked distressed. "Are you sure?" she asked.

The girl nodded. "I'll take you. Come 'long. Tossi can take us both."

"Oh, no, he's too little."

The girl laughed. "He's very strong. No, it won't hurt him. He loves me and I don't let him be hurt." She flung her arms around the neck of the pony and kissed the white star on his forehead.

Eleanor at last consented to mount him, sitting behind the girl and holding fast to her as they dashed up the road. Once she asked breathlessly: "Do you know where the butterman lives? His name is Mr. Snyder."

"I knows him," returned her companion laughing, but she did not stop till they came in sight of a group of gaudy wagons.

"Oh!" cried Eleanor. "Those are gipsies."

The girl jumped down. "My people," she said with a wave of her hand.

"Are you a gipsy?" Eleanor was quite taken aback.

The girl nodded in reply, standing with one arm over the neck of her little pony.

"But I want to go to Mr. Snyder's," said Eleanor helplessly, all the stories she had ever heard of gipsies coming to her mind.

The girl led the pony slowly along toward the wagons and Eleanor could see that beyond them, in a small enclosure, were many horses, and that in some of the wagons, with their red and yellow adornings, were women and children. "Please don't go on," she said. "I don't want to go there."

"Wha' for?" again said the girl.

"I want to find Mr. Snyder."

"He your papa?"

"No."

"You live there?"

"No."

"Then wha' for?"

"I want him to take me somewhere. Perhaps

you know where Sylvy Johnson lives. She is a colored woman. I would just as soon go to her house as to Mr. Snyder's."

The girl shook her head. "Don't know. We had a little nigger girl not long ago. She went to the orspital, my brodder say. She was hurted." Then she suddenly looked up saying: "I like you. I wish you'd stay and see my big brudder. He have anudder pony like this one; he'll let you ride on him."

At this moment one of the dark, queer-looking women came from one of the wagons toward them and Eleanor took affright. "Oh, no, please, —I am very much obliged to you for letting me ride your pony; he is a darling, but I am afraid to stay. I'm not afraid of you, for you are a very nice, kind little girl, but I do want to go. I am so tired, and—and—please."

"Come on." The girl swung herself upon the pony, and giving the pretty creature a slap with her hand she made him turn around and they were soon dashing down the road again to the spot where Eleanor had been first seen by the gipsy girl.

Eleanor got down and looked up the lane. "Does Mr. Snyder live in there?" she asked.

"Don't know."

"But you said you knew where he lived."

"No, I says I know him, an' so I does."

"But you said he had gone out another way."

"Maybe. I don't know. No, he's comin' now. I see his wagon top. I said that because I wanted you to come and see my brudder and me."

"Are you going to be at that place long?"

"Don't know. P'r'aps. You want to buy a pony? My brudder will sell you a good one cheap."

"I'd like to have one like yours. Isn't he a beauty? I always wanted to ride a little pony like this, and I am glad I could do it. Did your father give it to you?"

"No, I haven't got no fadder."

"Your mother then?"

"No," the girl shook her head. "I haven't got no mudder; my brudder give him to me. What you got in your bundle?"

"Some clothes and my doll named Ada."

"I got a doll too; her name is—what's your name?"

"Eleanor."

"Her name is Eleanor like you."

"What is your name?"

"Zula."

"I think that is a pretty name. I'll name my next doll that."

"Come and see me and I'll show you my doll. My brudder bought it for me. I like your ribbon on your hair. Give it to me."

Eleanor hesitated. She didn't like to refuse and yet she did not know whether it was exactly right to give it to her, but finally she did take it off, for she thought Zula had really been very kind. "Here," she said, "you may have it."

Zula tied it around her black tresses and laughed. "Here comes Snyder," she said, "good-bye." And jumping on her horse she was off like a flash.

Eleanor watched her red jacket out of sight and then said to herself, "I wish I had asked her more about that little colored girl. I wonder if she was a servant or what. I'm glad Bubbles don't have to go traveling around the country with gipsies. She'll be glad to see me, and so will Sylvy. What a long time Mr. Snyder has been at that house."

CHAPTER VI

Where is Bubbles?

At last the man came driving down the lane. He drew rein as he saw the little figure by the gate. "Want a lift, little girl?" he asked cheerfully.

"Yes, please," Eleanor responded. And the man helped her up beside him.

"How far are you going?" he asked.

"To Sylvy's," Eleanor answered in all simplicity.

"To Sylvy's? You don't mean Sylvy Johnson's? No wonder you want a lift. What are you going away off there for? It is a long way for a little girl to go alone. Bless me!" He looked closer. "Bless my soul, if it isn't the little Dallas girl! Why, what does this mean? What's the matter at your house that they're running you off in this fashion?"

Eleanor's cough interrupted her speech for a moment, and the man tucked a warm cover

closer around her. "See here," he continued, "I'll take you home with me, and we'll see what's to be done. I'm not in the notion of your going to Johnson's by yourself. How did you expect to get back?"

"I didn't expect to get back at all, at least, not till mamma comes home."

"Why, that's the queerest thing I ever heard. Did Mrs. Murdoch send you off there?"

"No," Eleanor confessed, "I am going of my own accord. Cousin Ellen doesn't know anything about it."

"Hm—hm." Mr. Snyder nodded thoughtfully. "Well, Mrs. Snyder will settle it. I can't take you back just at once, for I must go home and feed my horses, and get a bite myself, but if mother says so, home you go."

"Oh, no, please," begged Eleanor. "I want to go to Sylvy's."

"Well, you wait and see what my wife says. Mrs. Snyder'll know what's best. 'Tain't much further; only a couple of miles. Here, get up, Pete. Get up, Morgan." And the horses quickened their trot soon bringing them up to a substantial white house standing back some distance from the

road. "Here we are," said Mr. Snyder, lifting Eleanor down. "Whoa there, Pete! I'd better fasten that horse; he's dead set on getting to the stable. He knows it's his dinner time."

A rosy-faced woman came to the side door. "Here, mother," said Mr. Snyder, "I've got company for you; Mr. Dallas's little girl. Run in, honey, out of the cold. It's blowing up, mother. Take the little girl in where it's warm, and I'll come as soon as I've fed the stock."

Into a clean warm kitchen Eleanor was led. There was an odor of fried ham and potatoes, and from an iron pot, bubbling on the stove, came a spicy smell. "Take off your things, honey," said Mrs. Snyder in a matter-of-fact way, as if the coming of a strange little girl to dinner were an everyday occurrence, and Eleanor obeyed, glad of the warmth and the welcome.

Mr. Snyder was not long gone, and when he returned he remarked, "This young lady wants to go to Johnson's, Almiry. What do you think of that?"

"Not to stay!" said Mrs. Snyder, pausing in the act of taking a pan of biscuits from the

oven. "You wasn't meaning to stay, was you?" she asked Eleanor.

"Yes, till my mother comes home. You see, Bubbles is there, at least, I suppose she is. Didn't she come with you about two weeks ago, Mr. Snyder?"

"With me? No, indeed. Do you mean the little darky girl that lives at your house? Haven't laid eyes on her."

"Oh!" Eleanor's eyes grew big with anxiety, and her chin began to quiver. "Then she's lost, unless she is at Sylvy's. Won't you please take me there?"

"Why, child," said Mrs. Snyder, "that ain't a fit place for you; just a little two-story cabin with a loft. What on earth possesses you to want to go there? Hear the child cough, Ben. Sounds to me like the whooping-cough; mighty like it. I shouldn't be surprised if the child had it. She oughtn't to be running wild around the country in this way."

"Oh, do you think I really have it? I am so glad," Eleanor exclaimed in a satisfied tone.

Mr. Snyder laughed. "Funny thing to be glad about."

"Why, you see, they have all got it at my aunt's in the city and that is why I couldn't go there when mamma went away, and now maybe I can."

"But what put it into your head to come so far from home to-day?" Mrs. Snyder asked.

Eleanor hung her head. "Because—because, Don hung my doll, and I can't bear him, and they don't believe anything I say, and nobody loves me, and I was so lonely I just couldn't stand it."

Mrs. Snyder looked at her husband and then gathered Eleanor into her motherly arms. "Poor little thing! Homesick in her own home; mother sick, I reckon. Let us keep her here a bit, Ben. You told me a month ago that Mrs. Dallas had gone off to them Hot Springs and left the child with kinfolks. I remember, because you said you'd never had no complaint of your butter and eggs from that house in all these years, and you reckoned Mrs. Murdoch was kind of fussy. Ain't her name Murdoch?"

"Yes, that's it; Murdoch. She did say the butter was too salt and couldn't I bring her bigger eggs; these was too small; and I told

her I'd call the hen's attention to it, and tell them they must keep their tape-measures in their pockets. She didn't half like that. Fact is, she told me she'd get some one else to serve her."

"And that house has been supplied by you ever since Mrs. Dallas went there a bride. Well, child, I guess your mother didn't know who she was leaving you with. I reckon you haven't been very well looked after. Here, set right up here and eat some dinner. She looks kind of blue around the mouth, Ben. I don't think she'd ought to go back to-day, in this cold wind."

"Then, I'll send word to Mrs. Murdoch by Lem. He can go some time before night; I'd as lief let her worry for a while. He can go 'round by Johnson's and see if the little darky is there. Very likely she's all snug with them. Some one else probably gave her a lift. I remember, now, I didn't go to town on Wednesday week. I went to that sale over by the crossroads, and I got Nat Gilam to go for me. No doubt she went with him to Johnson's. Don't you worry about her, honey. What you got bilin' in that pot, mother?"

"Suet puddin'. Seemed like the day for it. I'd as lief let her fuss for a while, that Mrs. Murdoch, I mean. Butter too salt, indeed."

"Give the child somethin' to eat, mother; she ain't scarcely touched anything."

"She's half sick," said Mrs. Snyder, regarding the child with kind eyes. "Don't you pester her, Mr. Snyder. I'll look after her. I've lost six," she said to Eleanor, "and it's mighty lonely sometimes. I'm glad enough to see a little child, once in a while."

"There, mother, there; don't let's talk about it now," said Mr. Snyder; "you'll be losin' your appetite next. I'm savin' a place for that suet puddin' myself."

Eleanor watched with wonder the huge amount of food which Mr. Snyder consumed, but she hardly tasted any herself, and after the good man had left the kitchen and Mrs. Snyder had washed the dishes and put them away, she took the child on her lap and rocked her in an old splint-bottomed chair which had a cozy squeak to it, so that, feeling very content, Eleanor fell asleep to the accompaniment of creaking chair and singing teakettle.

She did not awaken till the short winter day had ended. Once she stirred and was dimly conscious of being placed in a more comfortable position, and felt herself warmly covered up and a soft kiss imprinted upon her cheek; then she dropped into a sound sleep, to dream that her mother was near her; that it was soft spring weather and the birds were singing in the apple-tree by the kitchen door.

It was when Mr. Snyder came noisily into the kitchen that she sat up and rubbed her eyes, wondering where she was. "There, now, Ben, you've waked the child, and she was sleeping so sweetly. I think she's got a little fever." Mrs. Snyder bent over her, looking much concerned. "How do you feel, my dear? Are you rested?"

"Oh, yes." Eleanor threw off the shawl which had covered her, and arose to her feet. "I feel very much rested, thank you, Mrs. Snyder."

"Bless her dear heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Snyder, hugging her up close to her.

Eleanor gave a sigh of satisfaction. "It was so nice to have you rock me to sleep," she said. "It made me feel as if I had mamma again."

"I went over to see about your little Bubbles," said Mr. Snyder, "but nobody's seen her. Sylvy showed every tooth in her head when she saw me, and I told her you were here with us. I could scarcely keep her from coming right over, but I told her you were too tired and were taking a nap. How far did you trot behind my wagon? All the way out from town to Murphy's, mother. That's where I met up with her. Sylvy says she will be here to-morrow, and I've sent word to your cousin that you are safe and sound, but that you've got the whooping-cough. That'll finish the business, I think, mother. Those precious children of hers are all made of gold studded with diamonds, and if there's any way to prevent your coming near them she'll agree to it." He nodded knowingly at Eleanor.

Two red spots were burning on the child's cheeks; her eyes were very bright, and her hands hot, so that Mrs. Snyder declared that she must go to bed early, and after supper, for which Eleanor had but little appetite, she was dosed with an herby draught and snugly placed between warm sheets in a clean little room where a wood stove roared and sent out a pleasant heat. "I

shall be right in here," Mrs. Snyder said, "so don't you be scared. If your cough is bad in the night, I'll come in and give you something for it." She stooped to give a good-night kiss, and Eleanor reached out her arms from under the covers and clasped the good woman's neck.

"I do love you," she said. "Nobody has kissed me good-night since mamma went away. Where do you suppose poor little Bubbles is? Oh, Mrs. Snyder, I am so distressed about her. I'm afraid she might be the one that Zula, the gipsy girl, told me about. Why didn't I ask more about her? I never thought it might be Bubbles. I thought of course that she was safe with Sylvy."

"There, dear, there, Mr. Snyder'll see about it the first thing in the morning," said Mrs. Snyder.

But Eleanor kept repeating: "What has become of her? Poor little Bubbles!" She sobbed piteously, and for all Mrs. Snyder comforted her as best she could, it was a long time before she could go to sleep, and when she did her pillow was wet with tears.

Meantime, quite a stir was caused by Eleanor's

long absence. Olive and Jessie returned home from school with the news that Eleanor had not been seen since eleven o'clock, when she was met by some of the girls on her way to Mrs. Wills'. Miss Reese had questioned the old woman who remembered that the little Dallas girl had been there. Yes, she had been there, and she had not stopped long; but Mrs. Wills said nothing about the bundle which Eleanor had left in her care and which she had taken away with her. The old woman had a very poor memory, at the best, and she was peculiar.

Miss Reese stopped to report the result of her inquiries to Mrs. Murdoch. "Just like the child," said the latter; "she delights to annoy me, and has taken this means of doing it. She probably wanted to play truant, and will be coming toward night, no doubt." Nevertheless, there was an undercurrent of anxiety, and some qualms of conscience regarding the child's real reason for going off in this stealthy way, and as the afternoon wore on and no Eleanor appeared, Mrs. Murdoch became more and more annoyed. "The child was left in my care," she said to Olive, "and her mother will censure me if anything

happens to her. Do you and Donald hunt around the house and grounds for her, and I will send Jessie to the houses where she would be most likely to visit."

But after a thorough search, Olive, of course, reported that no Eleanor was to be found, and then, just as Mrs. Murdoch was really getting worked up into a state of nervous fear and dread, Miss Reese came in. "I have just received a little note from Eleanor," she said, "and she tells me that she has gone to find Bubbles." She handed the note to Mrs. Murdoch, who read it without a word, although under Miss Reese's quiet gaze, she flushed slightly.

"It is not always easy to understand children," said Miss Reese gently. "Often their little hearts are bleeding under an indifferent, and, often, defiant exterior. Eleanor has always had a life so full of love and sympathy that any lack of it would probably affect her more seriously than it would a less emotional child."

"I am sure I have tried to do my duty," said Mrs. Murdoch plaintively. "I have bathed her with my own hands more than once, and I have been most particular to see that she was properly

clad, and I have seen to it that she had her study hour."

Miss Reese said only: "She is safe, at all events. I think that Dr. Sullivan goes out in that direction and perhaps, to-morrow, he will stop and bring her back with him. He is very fond of her, I know, and it would not be asking him to perform an unpleasant task. Shall I speak to him about it?"

"I shall be very much relieved if you will," returned Mrs. Murdoch, glad to see a way out of the difficulty; and Miss Reese departed. But next came word from Mr. Snyder that Eleanor was at his house, and that she was not well; Mrs. Snyder had a suspicion that she might be developing the whooping-cough. Perhaps she would best stay where she was till the truth could be learned from the doctor.

Therefore, much against his will, Donald was despatched to take word to Miss Reese and to the doctor. "That child will be the death of me," complained Mrs. Murdoch. "I wish to heavens I had never undertaken the care of her. I know nothing about these people to whom she has gone."

But a call from the doctor reassured her. "She couldn't be in better hands," he said. "I'll stop there to-morrow and see how she is. Bless the little monkey! she ought to have come to me, if she was sick. She is a dear child, one of the sweetest I ever knew, and that is a good deal for a doctor to say." Mrs. Murdoch probably did not agree with him, but she did not say so.

But Eleanor, sleeping soundly, did not concern herself about any of this and little knew what the morrow had in store for her.

CHAPTER VII

Uncle Heath

THE little girl's thoughts upon first awakening were concerning Bubbles. She slipped out of bed and as she jumped upon the braided mat which lay upon the floor the noise informed Mrs. Snyder that she was up and her pleasant face appeared at the door. "Scramble back again, honey," she said, "till I get this fire stirred up. The room will be warm in a jiffy if I put in a stick of wood and open the drafts. Mr. Snyder's gone to hunt up them gipsies; he'll be back by the time you're ready for breakfast. Can you dress yourself? If you want me to fasten any buttons, just run down to the kitchen. I've some bread in the oven and I must be looking after it."

Eleanor hurried to dress, for she was very anxious to hear if Bubbles had been seen by the gipsies, and she was at the kitchen window

watching for Mr. Snyder when he drove up. He entered the room in his usual hearty blustering way. "Breakfast ready, mother?" he asked.

"All ready. I'm dishing up now."

"Hallo, little one!" Mr. Snyder drew Eleanor to his knee. "Well, I've been to the gipsy camp, and they've cleared out; every hoof. It is getting too late for them and they want to get south. I'm sorry but it don't seem to me that Bubbles could be with them; more likely she's with some of the darkies in town."

Eleanor shook her head. "No, she wouldn't go to any of them, 'cause she told me she meant to come out here to Sylvy, for Sylvy said when she left, if Bubbles couldn't get along with Cousin Ellen she could come to her. You see, she's known Bubbles all her life; ever since Bubbles was a baby, and it isn't likely she'd go to any one else."

"That's so." Mr. Snyder nodded thoughtfully. "And you say that little gipsy girl told you there was a colored child at the camp?"

"Yes," Eleanor answered.

"Those gipsies have been about here for a couple of weeks. I mind just when they came.

Yes, it might be her. Well, Sylvy's coming over after a bit, and we'll see what she says about it. It seems to me if the child the gipsies had was Bubbles, that they would have let Sylvy know, or would have sent the child to her. Come now, breakfast is ready."

It was impossible, even with this anxiety of mind, not to enjoy Mrs. Snyder's delicious rolls and sweet butter, her honey and her country sausage, and Eleanor really ate heartily, although she was not feeling very well, and her cough troubled her. Mrs. Snyder suggested all sorts of queer remedies, chief among which was a decoction made from a hornet's nest which Eleanor rejected emphatically. "Oh, please, Mrs. Snyder, I shouldn't want that. It might make me feel a buzzy and stingy inside."

Mrs. Snyder laughed, and just then Sylvy came in. Eleanor greeted her joyfully. "Oh, Sylvy," she said, "I'm so glad to see you, but where do you suppose poor Bubbles is? I feel so dreadfully about her."

"Me too, honey," said Sylvy. "It on mah min' all de time. Tell me jes' how it happen she quit Miss Murdoch." And Eleanor related her

woeful little tale which brought many "uh-uhms" and "dar nows," from Sylvy.

"I git mah fathah to go 'roun' an' fin' out what he kin," said Sylvy, after Eleanor had concluded, "an' if nobody ain't seen her I'll reckon she's the one the gipsy folks has. How long yuh gwine stay here, honey?"

"I wish I could stay here till I hear from mamma. I like Mrs. Snyder and she says I am to stay to-day, anyhow."

She seemed so much brighter that morning that Mrs. Snyder's fears that she might have a very ill child on her hands were allayed, and Mr. Snyder joked with her saying he believed it was a disappointment to his wife not to have secured some one needing her nursing.

"Now, father," Mrs. Snyder protested, "it isn't that, but I'd like to keep the child here."

"So you shall, till we hear what the doctor says. If she's got the whoops she can't go back to school and she'll not be very welcome at Mrs. Murdoch's, I'll venture to say."

It was about noon that the doctor's buggy drove up. Sylvy, who had been giving Mrs. Snyder a helping hand in the kitchen, caught

sight of the doctor's white horse. "Hyar come Dr. Sullivan," she said. "I knows that white horse of his'n."

Eleanor ran to the window. "It is Dr. Sullivan, and he is coming here. There is some one with him; I wonder who it is."

"Miss Murdoch?"

"No, not Cousin Ellen; it is a man; I see his hat."

"Don't run out in the cold hall," Mrs. Snyder warned her. "The doctor will ride around to the side porch and I'll take him into the settin'-room. I'm glad there's a good fire in there, for it's snapping cold this morning."

Eleanor waited till she heard the doctor's hearty voice say: "I'll have you up for kidnapping, Mrs. Snyder. Where's that little girl of mine? Bless her heart, why didn't she come tell me her troubles? Here is somebody she'll be glad to see, if I'm not mistaken."

At this Eleanor ran in to see, not only her friend the doctor, but her dearly loved Uncle Heath. With a cry of joy she threw herself into the arms of the latter, forgetting every one else.

"Here, here," cried the doctor, "I want some of those kisses; don't give them all away. Look here, baby, what's all this row about, anyhow? What did you cut and run for?"

Eleanor hung her head, and then, by dint of questioning, they reached the root of the matter. The two men looked at each other, and the doctor said under his breath: "I'd like to have the dosing of that boy for about a week."

"Oh, Uncle Heath, you won't let me go back to Cousin Ellen, will you?" Eleanor said with entreaty in her tones.

He took her up in his lap and stroked her hair. "No, Miss Dimps, I have come on purpose to take you back home with me. On our way from California your Aunt Dora and I stopped to see your father and mother, and I have my pockets full of love for you." He did not say that Rock had sent his mother Eleanor's pitiful little letter and on account of this, more than anything else, Mrs. Heath Dallas and her husband had hurried home that Eleanor might come to them.

The little girl's hand stole into her uncle's pocket as if to gather up some of the love of which he spoke, and she nestled closer to him.

"Imagine my surprise when I called upon Mrs. Murdoch last evening to be told that you were not there," her Uncle Heath went on. "I was referred to our good friend, Dr. Sullivan, and here we are, ready to pick you up and carry you back with us."

"Weren't you s'prised not to see Sylvy or Bubbles come to the door at our house? And, oh, doesn't it look queer with the furniture in the parlor all switched around in a different way from that mamma used to have it?"

"I'm afraid those things made very little impression on me, for I was very anxious to see my little niece and didn't think of any one else. Now, how soon can you be ready to go back with me?"

A fit of coughing brought from the doctor: "Here, here, what is that? The child has the whooping-cough."

"Yes," said Eleanor between her gasps, "Mrs. Snyder told me so."

"Then, that settles it; you can't go back to Mrs. Murdoch. She'd sweep you out with a broom, and then go into hysterics for fear her children had caught the disease."

"Do you suppose they have?"

"I can't say; it is not improbable, but at all events, you'd best not go back there. Mrs. Sullivan will keep you till you are ready to take your journey, I am sure."

"Sylvy can go in with me," Uncle Heath said. "She knows where your traps are, I suppose, and she can help Mrs. Murdoch to get them ready for you. Your mamma said all your toys and such things of yours as might be in the way, were to be locked up in your little house in the yard."

"Oh," —Eleanor exclaimed, and then stopped short.

"What's the matter?" asked her uncle.

"Why, Donald has that, and it's so dirty and battered up out there."

"How is that? What is Donald doing out there? Did your mamma say he was to use your playhouse?"

Eleanor explained, and Uncle Heath's eyes snapped as he said, "We'll let Sylvy go in and clean it up; then she can carry back your belongings and set them in place. I'll have a Yale lock put on the door and the windows boarded

up. I have a letter from your mamma in which she tells exactly what is to be done, and there will be no trouble in carrying out her wishes, I think."

"Uncle Heath, you are a darling, but I wish you'd do just one thing more."

"And what is that?"

"Let Rock come home from boarding-school; he isn't having a bit of a nice time."

"I know it, and although boys aren't usually sent away from home to school to have a good time, he is coming away for the Christmas holidays and will not return. I suppose you'd like me to carry Sylvy, and perhaps the doctor, back with me," he said, pinching her cheek.

"Yes, I should like that."

"Leave me out," said the doctor, "I can't neglect my practice for any youngster's whims."

"But you will try to find Bubbles, won't you, Uncle Heath?" Eleanor asked wistfully. "Do you suppose she could be in Baltimore at the hospital? You know Zula said her brother had taken a little colored girl to a hospital."

"What do you think, doctor?"

"She might be in Baltimore or in Washington.

I'll tell you what I'll do, Dimple; I'll telegraph to the different hospitals in both cities as soon as I get back home, and we'll find out I think without doubt. By the way, what is Bubbles' name?"

Eleanor looked at Sylvy. "It's Barbara, but I never thought about her having any other name."

"It's Markey," said Sylvy.

The doctor took out his notebook and jotted it down, and then repeated his assurance that he would use every effort to find out what had become of Bubbles.

Then it was settled that they should start the next morning. Sylvy went in bright and early and the little playhouse was made as clean as hands could make it, and it must be confessed that she took great satisfaction in turning out Master Donald and in reëstablishing Eleanor's toys in their accustomed places. To be sure Donald blustered and was inclined to do battle for the possession of the house, but a few words from Mr. Heath Dallas settled the matter and his mother assuring him that he could now have Eleanor's room he was pacified.

"He's not really a bad boy," her Uncle Heath told Eleanor, "but he is spoiled, and has been made to believe that every one should yield to him, so he has become very selfish and cannot imagine any rights that conflict with his wishes."

"Rock isn't that way."

"No, he has a wise mother."

Rock was Mr. Heath Dallas' stepson. He and Eleanor were great friends, and she looked forward with great delight to seeing him again. She was planning many happy times with him and with her Cousin Florence who lived not far from Mr. Heath Dallas. She asked her uncle if he thought Rock had had the whooping-cough. "Suppose he hasn't," she said.

"To be sure, I hadn't thought of that. I am pretty sure he has though, and at any rate, we'll take it for granted, and if he hasn't we can settle the question before he gets home."

"I could go to Aunt Nellie's, you know."

"Yes, but I hope we can keep you with us till your papa and mamma return."

Eleanor gave a little satisfied sigh. Her uncle had driven out from town to take her back with him, and she was about to take leave of good Mr

and Mrs. Snyder. Ada, attired in her grey traveling dress, and carrying her muff, was ready to go, and Sylvy had pressed so many cakes, apples and such things upon the child that she had to leave half of them behind her. To Sylvy, even the shortest journey demanded a supply of eatables.

The doctor had made every effort to discover the whereabouts of Bubbles, but had received no news of her from any of the hospitals.

"If she is still with the gipsies, she would hardly have reached the city yet," Eleanor was told for her comfort. "You may find her in Baltimore when you get there," the doctor said further, and Eleanor was obliged to be satisfied with this for the present.

As they passed the gate of her own home, Eleanor hugged Ada closer and looking up at her uncle said, "I never want to see my home again, Uncle Heath, until mamma is in it."

He smiled down at her. "You probably will not, dear child. We shall keep you with us as long as we can."

"I hope there won't be any children in the cars," continued the child, "for I might give them the whooping-cough."

"We are going to have the little compartment at the end of the parlor car, and we can be all to ourselves in there."

"Oh, can we? I've always wanted to travel in that little room, Uncle Heath. Did you get it on purpose?"

"Not exactly, but being a railroad man, I had it placed at my disposal."

It was nearly dark when they reached the city. Eleanor looked out at the stiff rows of houses, secretly glad that her home was not in one of these. She did not wonder that her Cousin Florence always said that she could not bear the city. "Uncle Heath," she said, "are all cities like Baltimore, with so many, many houses all alike, with no gardens at all and hardly any trees anywhere? I don't see why they can't have a little bit of a garden in front of them, or porches to the houses, or something. Cities are very ugly, aren't they?"

"Most of them are, but some do have a section where you can see pretty gardens and porches and many trees. Washington, you know, is very attractive, and so are parts of Philadelphia."

"Yes, I know Washington is, but I most for-

get Philadelphia. I've not been there for so long."

"We must go there some pleasant day."

"Rock too?"

"Yes; but here we are. Run in quickly."

The door was thrown open by Aunt Dora herself, who almost lifted Eleanor off her feet in the energy of her embrace. "You dear little midget," she exclaimed, "you did come all safe and sound, didn't you?"

"Yes, I came, and so did Ada. I was so glad to see Uncle Heath."

"I knew you would be. Are you cold? No, your hands are quite warm, and oh, yes; how do you do, Ada? I've not seen you for a long time," and the doll's hand was gravely shaken by Aunt Dora, to Eleanor's delight. "Let us go right upstairs," continued Aunt Dora, holding Eleanor's hand closely in hers. "You are to have a little room next to mine. It isn't very big, but I think you and Ada will fit into it without much crowding."

"It isn't Rock's room?" said Eleanor, with a remembrance of her late trials in some such direction.

"No, he has a room back of mine. I am so glad to get home again and to have you come to us right away. It seems so very lonely without any children in the house. I can hardly wait till Rock's holiday begins, to have him with me again. I know he is counting the days."

"Yes, he wrote to me that he was. He makes a little mark on his calendar every day."

"Yes, I know; the dear child. I have been planning a number of things for the holidays, but first I must tell you about your papa; he is really getting better, and I think if he will only consent to stay long enough, that he will come back quite well." She stooped to kiss Eleanor, and then continued: "You were a dear child not to write to them of your worries."

"How did you know?"

"A little bird told me."

"Rock?"

"Maybe. We might call it a rock wren."

"Oh, Aunt Dora, has Rock had the whooping-cough?"

"Yes, several years ago."

"Did you know I had it?"

"Yes, your Uncle Heath wrote me that you

had, and I have been thinking ever since, just suppose that Ada should take it!" Aunt Dora raised her hands in comic distress, and Eleanor looked gravely at her doll as if there were danger in that direction.

"Never mind," said her Aunt Dora; "she will not take it, I am sure. Now we will go down to dinner, if you are ready, and to-morrow I know the first person you will want to see."

"Florence?"

Aunt Dora nodded yes. "She is to come over to luncheon and the next day we will go out to do our Christmas shopping."

"Oh!" Eleanor was delighted, and she skipped downstairs by her aunt's side, looking very unlike the forlorn little figure waiting on the roadside for the butterman.

After dinner her uncle played dominoes with her and then her aunt took her upstairs and read a lovely fairy tale to her, and after she was snugly tucked in bed she had to have many good-night kisses before she was satisfied.

CHAPTER VIII

Shopping

Two such happy little girls they were who met the next morning; and for the first fifteen minutes they talked and laughed so hard that they nearly whooped themselves speechless for the rest of the day to make up for it, and when Eleanor, with very red weeping eyes and a puffed face found breath her first words were, "Isn't it perfectly splendid that I have the whooping-cough, too?"

And Florence, between whoops, spluttered, "Splendid."

"This is the first time I ever knew it to be cause for congratulation," said Aunt Dora laughing. "Now, this is market day, so, I am going to leave you to your own devices. I may be back before luncheon, and I may not. Meantime, make yourselves perfectly at home. You can play in the library or in Rock's room or anywhere, but in the parlor." Then she left them.

"You must see my lovely new Ada; she is a darling. Aunt Dora gave her to me, and she is such a comfort," said Eleanor. "I brought Celestine too."

"And I brought Rubina," said Florence; "she has a new hat."

"I think we'd better play in the library," said Eleanor. "It has such a nice bay window and we can have that for one house and the place over by the mantel for the other house. It is so perfectly lovely to see you again, Florence." And they, forthwith, proceeded to establish themselves for a morning's play, chattering as fast as their tongues could run, so that lunch time came before they were aware of it, and then, after all, Aunt Dora did not come home, but sent some dainties from the market and with their dolls they had luncheon at a small table in the library.

"Isn't it fine to have Rubina and Celestine together again?" said Florence. "Did Bubbles take Floridy Alabamy away with her? Poor Bubbles, I do hope your uncle will find her."

"I hope so too," returned Eleanor with a sigh. "Yes, she took her doll, but she is such a forlorn

looking creature; that horrid Donald got hold of her one day and pretended she was a witch and must be burned at the stake. Bubbles found it out just in time to save her, but her hair was singed off, and she has to wear a cap all the time."

"Aren't boys horrid?" said Florence in a disgusted tone.

"Some boys," returned Eleanor; "Rock isn't."

"No, he isn't, but Dimple, I should think you would be glad to leave that Cousin Ellen family. Sister says she doesn't think that relations are a bit nice."

"Why, Florence, we are relations."

"Yes, I know. I don't suppose she means that none of them are nice. I think she means that they are so likely to think they can pick you to pieces and find fault with you just because they are relations. Most of mine are that way. You know Cousin Ellen is my mamma's cousin, too, and I never did like to see her when she used to come to our house."

"Oh, well," said Eleanor with a satisfied sigh, "we don't have to think about her any more."

Nevertheless, she did much thinking on ac-

count of Cousin Ellen and her family, that very evening. Just after dinner her Aunt Dora said "We must make out our shopping lists, Dimple for we are going to start out early to-morrow."

"Let me see your purse, Dimple," said Uncle Heath, looking up from his evening paper.

Eleanor obediently went upstairs and brought down her little netted purse; it had in it one dollar and two quarters.

"How many Christmas gifts do you expect this to buy?" asked Uncle Heath smiling.

"Why, let me see;" Eleanor began to count on her fingers; "mamma, one, and papa, two; you and Aunt Dora and Rock and Florence and Bubbles, I should like to get Bubbles a new doll, and I do want so much to send just a little something to Mrs. Snyder. Then I should like something for Miss Reese and I always give Sylvy a present. How many does that make? Ten, I believe."

Her uncle chinked her coins in his hand, and looked at his wife with a smile. "Then, you will have just fifteen cents apiece. I'm afraid you cannot buy very magnificent things with that amount."

"And how about your cousins, the Murdochs?" asked Mrs. Dallas quietly. "They will have no papa to buy them gifts this year, and I am afraid it will be rather a sad Christmas for them." Eleanor's speaking face clouded, and she gave a long sigh, before she said, "I don't love them very much, Aunt Dora, but—Uncle Heath, must I give them Christmas gifts? That would make five more, you know, and—no, I don't love them enough."

"Suppose, instead of being merely ill and away from you, your papa should be gone from this earth, and that, in consequence, the lovely Christmas you always have had should be a very sad one this year."

"Yes, I know," replied Eleanor thoughtfully, "but I'd have you and Uncle Heath and Aunt Nellie and all of them to give me Christmas gifts."

Her uncle laughed. "Her wounds are too recent for her to be worked upon in any such way, Dora. How much money did you say you had in your purse, Dimple?"

"A silver dollar and two quarters."

Her uncle handed the small purse back to her.

"Look again; I'm afraid you don't know how to count."

Eleanor emptied the purse into her lap, and lo! instead of only one dollar there were five. She gave a scream of delight. "Oh, Uncle Heath, how dear you are. Do you truly mean this all for me?"

"What a question. What is in your purse is yours, isn't it? I told you that you didn't know how to count." And this was all the satisfaction she could get from him, although there was no doubt that Uncle Heath had slipped in the extra dollars.

"Now, I can get a doll for Bubbles, for we must find her," she said. "Now I shall have fifty cents instead of fifteen; no, I shall have more than that." She fingered the money absently. "Aunt Dora," she said after a pause, "I will get something for Cousin Ellen and all of them. To be sure they were not very nice to me, but I said hateful things, too, and I'd feel better about it if I were to send them something. I could spend twenty-five cents on each of them, you know, and, even then, I'd have more than I thought I should have for every one else."

Her Aunt Dora smiled. "What did I tell you, Heath? Well, dear, I think that will be a very good plan, and I am sure that we can find some very pretty little gifts to-morrow, perhaps for even less than twenty-five cents. Now, I tell you what I should do: I should spend the most, as you ought to do, upon your father and mother, and then get Bubbles her doll. After that we can spend the rest of the money upon the remaining persons."

This suited Eleanor exactly, and she said so. But just at this moment came a ring at the door and a telegram was handed to Mr. Dallas. He read it and looked up brightly at Eleanor. "Bubbles is found," he said; "she is at the hospital from which I have just received this telegram. I left word at each one of them that I was to be informed if a child of her description should come in. It seems she is not in a very bad state, but has a broken arm."

"Oh," Eleanor clasped her hands, "dear Uncle Heath, can we go get her right away?"

"Why, no, I'm afraid not."

Eleanor looked disappointed. "Why not?"

"First, because it is after visiting hours, and

second, because a little girl with the whooping-cough would hardly be admitted into the ward of a hospital."

"Oh, I forgot that."

"She will be well taken care of, dear," said Aunt Dora. "I am very glad she is in so safe a place. To-morrow, before we do any of our shopping, we will stop at the hospital and learn how she is. It is much better to allow her to remain there till she is able to be moved safely, than to try to take her away now. You know we cannot tell yet just how she may be."

Eleanor agreed that it was best to wait. "But I hope she will be well by Christmas," she said.

As it proved, Bubbles was not in so desperately bad a condition. She had, indeed, been with the gipsies, some of whom she met as she was trudging along toward Sylvy's, after having missed seeing Mr. Snyder. The bright wagons and gay dresses attracted her and she lingered by the way to watch this troup of wandering people. One of the men was training a restive young horse which came dashing down the road, and as Bubbles tried to get out of the way, she was struck by another horse which had become

excited and had broken loose. A broken arm and some bruises were the result for Bubbles. It was at first feared that she might be injured internally, but after a week's nursing, it was found that she was not, and a portion of the encampment having been started on ahead, Bubbles was sent with them that she might sooner reach the city and be placed in a hospital where she could receive attention and communicate with her friends. She had sent word by one of the gipsy boys to Sylvy of her whereabouts but the message failed of delivery.

The two little girls waiting outside in the carriage while Mrs. Dallas made her call, greeted her eagerly, when she came out, and listened with the greatest interest to the report, asking all manner of questions. "Wasn't she glad to see you? Is she very sick? What is the matter besides the broken arm? Did the gipsies take her there? How long has she got to stay?" The questions came tumbling over one another till Mrs. Dallas declared she did not know which to answer.

"One at a time," she said laughing. "She was perfectly delighted to see me, poor little soul;

she looks quite weak and miserable but she will have every care. I saw the head nurse, and she told me that Bubbles is in no danger. She has a broken arm and had a big lump on her head which made her delirious for several days. The gipsies were very kind to her and took her to the hospital. She will probably be out in a couple of weeks."

"By Christmas?" Eleanor asked.

"Yes, I hope so, at least, if she improves as they think she will. She sent her love to you and Florence, and she said that one of the gipsy children had stolen her doll, so we shall get her one to-day, instead of waiting to give it to her at Christmas. I think she would rather have that than anything else. She is perfectly content, now that she knows we are near her, and that she is to come to our house as soon as she is able. I promised that I would go to see her as often as I could."

Eleanor gave a deep sigh. "I'm so thankful," she said. "Poor little Bubbles." The child was not looking very bright, and Mrs. Dallas concluded that the shopping expedition should be very short that day.

They did their shopping in rather a funny way, for Aunt Dora thought it was not best for them to go into the shops themselves, and so, she selected the articles and brought them out to the carriage that Eleanor might approve them before they were sent home. Of course in every case she was entirely satisfied, and when they came to Florence's present that young person turned her head and shut her eyes tight that she might not get even a glimpse of the game that Aunt Dora had selected. But when it came to the present for Aunt Dora here was a quandary, till Aunt Dora suggested that they should stop before the shop where the purchase was to be made and she would send a salesman out to wait upon them while she went on to another shop where they could call for her. This plan worked very well and a pretty little candlestick for her writing desk was carefully placed among the packages in the small basket which was provided for the articles which they were to take home themselves.

The first purchase was the doll for Bubbles, and Florence suggested that it should be as much like Eleanor as possible, therefore, a fair creature

with light flowing locks and blue eyes was chosen.

For her father, "a book which will make him laugh," Eleanor decided upon. "And for my blessed mamma something very lovely," and after looking at many things, a very dainty, fluffy tie was chosen because Aunt Dora said it would be easy to send it by mail. The rest of the purchases were put off till another time, and the next morning after the doll had been left at the hospital for Bubbles they continued their shopping, getting a game for Rock, a cup and saucer for Uncle Heath, a bright necktie for Sylvy, a pretty booklet for Miss Reese, and a comical little match-safe for Mrs. Snyder, "so she will think of me every time she lights her lamp," Eleanor said. After this, the Murdoch family had to be disposed of, and this took the rest of the morning, so that Eleanor returned home with an empty purse but with a well satisfied feeling at having provided for every one.

The next day was to be spent with Florence, and when Eleanor put her head on her pillow that night, although she was a very tired little girl she had before her a pleasant anticipation

and no regrets. Her last thought before going to sleep was, "I am glad I got something for Cousin Ellen and the children," and she fell asleep at peace with the whole world.

When she awoke the next morning the ground was covered with snow and her aunt met her with: "I wonder if it is prudent to send the whooping-cough out of doors to-day. A fresh snow is liable to give fresh cold. Shall you be much disappointed, Dimple, if I ask you to stay at home to-day?"

"I did want to go so much," she said wistfully.

"I know you did, but although it is not very far to Florence's house, the cars will not take you there, and even if they did, I should not want you to go that way. You would best stay at home, I think, and we can make a new dress and a hat for Bubbles' doll."

At this Eleanor's face brightened and when Uncle Heath volunteered to stop at Mr. Graham's and ask if Florence could come and spend the day with Eleanor, if an opportunity occurred to send her around, Eleanor was quite satisfied. "I am glad Aunt Nellie has a carriage," she said, "for Florence will be so much more likely to

come. I think it was very nice for Aunt Nell to let us go shopping in the carriage, for I couldn't have gone at all any other way."

About noon the jingle of sleigh-bells announced the approach of a sleigh, and looking out of the window there Eleanor saw Florence and her eldest sister. Florence was seen to hop out and then the sleigh drove off. Eleanor ran down into the hall to greet her cousin. "Hurry, Florence," she said. "I am so glad you came. We are dressing Bubbles' doll, at least, we are making a new dress for her, and a hat and coat. Come right upstairs."

"I can stay till three o'clock," Florence told her, "and then mamma will stop for me, and she wants you to go for a little ride in the sleigh. Should you like to?"

"Of course," Eleanor answered. "I was just wishing that I could go when I heard your bells jingling. Dr. Sullivan sometimes takes me with him at home, but not very often."

"We don't often have sleighing," returned Florence. "At least, not to last very long. I am glad we have some while you are here. Oh, Dimple, there are so many mysteries at home; I

can hardly wait till Christmas. We are going to have a tree. Are you?"

"Yes, Aunt Dora says she is glad to have the excuse to have one; it seems so much more Christmassy."

They spent the next hour or two in helping to make the doll clothes, or, at least, they thought they were helping, though it must be confessed that Aunt Dora did most of the work. At three o'clock the sleigh came jingling up, and they had a five drive out through the park and Eleanor came home with more color in her cheeks than they had worn for some weeks.

CHAPTER IX

At Christmas

THE next day Eleanor was able to go over to her Aunt Nellie's, for the sun was shining brightly, and the pavements were cleared of snow. Florence and her other cousins greeted her warmly. They were all much excited over the approach of Christmas, and Eleanor was piloted up to the nursery, "Because," said Florence, "there is so much going on downstairs, and some of sister's friends will be down in our room. Mamma has gone out, but she will be back directly." And they proceeded to establish themselves and set to work industriously to finish some embroidery which each had to have ready for Christmas. They had hardly begun to work, however, when Mrs. Graham appeared, and Eleanor scurried her bit of linen out of sight, but Florence arose to the occasion with: "Mamma, Dimple and I have been talking about the Christmas party that we always have. We were won-

dering how we could manage it this year when we all have the whooping-cough. We have a lovely plan, though."

"Have you?" said her mother, sitting down and drawing off her gloves. "Let us hear it."

"Why," answered Florence, looking very wise as she threaded her needle, "we think it would be nice to have a whooping party."

Her mother laughed. "That's a queer sort of party. Do you mean to play Indian?"

"No, I mean we can have all the little girls and boys that are having the whooping-cough and that can't go to school or anywhere."

"And how many do you suppose that will be?"

"I don't know. I know four or five. May we have it, mamma?"

"Why, I don't know. I shall have to think about it. I suppose I should have to furnish lozenges and cough syrup for refreshments."

Florence laughed; it struck her as a very funny sort of refreshment, but she knew her mother was joking, although she added quite seriously, "We should have to be careful not to have anything very rich, you know. I think, after all, you'd best think of something else, for,

a room full of children whooping and choking one after another, would be rather an unpleasant scene. Don't you think something else would be more amusing? You and Dimple put your thinking-caps on and we'll see what can be done to amuse you during the holidays."

Florence agreed to this and the two little girls proceeded with their work while they tried to think very hard, looking very sober as they stitched away. They were interrupted by the entrance of Florence's little sister Gertrude, who had been down town with her mother and who came in full of importance at having had presents provided for her to bestow at Christmas. "I've got sumpsin for ev'ybody," she said, "but I'm not doing to tell."

Florence hugged her up close to her. "Won't you tell me?" she asked coaxingly.

"No," Gertrude shook her head, "I tan't tell."

"What color is the one you have for me?" Florence asked.

"It's white, an' it sumpsin to wipe your nose on. Now, I won't tell you one sing more," and she pursed up her lips tight, looking very wise while the others laughed heartily but pretended

to be much mystified. These were very mysterious times, anyhow. Some one was always skurrying something under a chair or poking something into a closet whenever certain persons entered the room, and there were unfamiliar snippings of lace and silk and cambric to be seen on the floor in the nursery, so that Florence was wrought up to a pitch of curiosity rather unusual for her.

"You are to come over here right after breakfast, Christmas morning," she told Eleanor; "you and Rock. I wish you could stay here all night so that we could hang up our stockings together. I do so wish you could."

Eleanor looked a little doubtful; she did not want to neglect her Aunt Dora and her Uncle Heath, not to mention Rock. "I am afraid I couldn't do that," she said. "You know Rock will be at home and it would seem mean to leave them all on Christmas morning."

"Rock could come to; it would be such fun to have you," continued Florence, all hospitality, but Eleanor declared that would never do, and so they had to give up the plan. But, after all, it did turn out that Eleanor spent Christmas eve

with her cousins, for Florence's mother decided that the children should have their Christmas tree at that time, that they might all go to Mrs. Heath Dallas' on Christmas night and see the tree that was to be prepared for Rock and Eleanor.

"Aunt Dora won't tell me anything about the tree," Eleanor told Florence, "so there's some sort of surprise, I know. Isn't it just fine that we can all be here together? I should have been so miserable at home."

"I don't see how you could have stood Cousin Ellen and have been nice to her," said Florence.

Eleanor was silent for a moment and took several stitches in the doyly she was embroidering in outline stitch for her Aunt Nellie. "Well, I wasn't very nice to her," she admitted after a time. "I meant to be in the beginning, but when Don was so hateful and they treated Bubbles so mean, I just didn't care and I said anything that came into my head. Sometimes, when I got real mad, I was the sauciest girl you ever heard."

"Are you going to tell your mother?" Florence asked solemnly.

"I—I don't know. Maybe. Yes, I always tell mamma everything; somehow, it comes out

whether I want it to or not. Yes, I'll tell her, but I couldn't be meek and lowly ; I just couldn't. I never knew I could feel so very, very mad at any one before, but, you see, now that I am not there, I don't feel so mad, and I'm going to send the Christmas gifts, you know. I'll tell you what I'll do : I'll write to Cousin Ellen, and tell her I am sorry I was saucy, but I'll not say I am sorry about Donald, for I'm not." And Florence agreed that she could hardly be expected to.

The letter was written that very day and was tucked in the box with the Christmas gifts. It ran :

"DEAR COUSIN ELLEN:

"I hope you will have a happy Christmas I am having a lovely time, and Bubbles is getting along finely. Every one at the hospital likes her and she is just as nice as she was when mamma was at home. I thought you would be glad to know that she is not so much hurt as we were afraid of because you sent her away and you would feel very bad if you thought you had made her get hurt very bad. I send you all a little Christmas gift. I hope you will like what I send. Were you ever impident when you were a little girl ? I am sorry I was.

"Yours

"ELEANOR DALLAS."

Eleanor submitted the letter to her Aunt Nellie who read it and laughing, said: "You have said just the right thing, Dimple, and if Cousin Ellen can remember as far back as a certain occasion when she was a little girl I think she could answer, 'yes,' to your last question."

"Was she a nice little girl? Did you know her then, Aunt Nellie?"

"Yes, I knew her very well. She was my cousin, you know, but I don't believe your mother and I were as fond of her as you are of Florence. She hasn't changed so very much, I fancy."

"Then she couldn't have been so very nice," Eleanor concluded.

It was the day upon which they expected Rock to return home, and Eleanor was in a high state of excitement. There must be other arrivals to be looked for, too, for Aunt Dora was having the largest guest room made ready and one or two telegrams had arrived. "Are you expecting somebody else?" she ventured to ask.

"Yes," Aunt Dora answered smiling.

Eleanor's wistful eyes asked the question before her lips said, "Not papa and mamma?"

Aunt Dora stooped and kissed her. "No, dear, I wish I could say it was they for whom I am looking, but I'll tell you this much: they are strangers to me."

Eleanor puzzled over this. It seemed funny for Aunt Dora to entertain strangers at Christmas time, and she was rather disappointed that it should be so; it seemed as if it made a more formal day of it than she could enjoy. She determined to ask Rock about it so soon as she should have a chance, but he knew no more about it than she did and could not coax the secret from his mother. Rock had grown, Eleanor discovered, and although he was quite a rough and tumble boy, liking to be out of doors and to play all sorts of games requiring muscle, he was as kind and polite and gentle when he was in the house, as he ever had been, and Eleanor did not feel that her old comrade had lost anything by going to boarding-school. He was about a year older than Eleanor and she had known him when his mother was a widow and before she had married Eleanor's Uncle Heath.

"It's too bad that you can't go down town with me to buy my presents," Rock said to her

the day he arrived. "But, I say, Dimple it's jolly to have you here. I was so glad when I heard you were coming."

"You weren't as glad as I was," she returned. "And isn't it fine that you don't have to go back to that hateful school?"

Rock looked sober. "Yes, it is," he replied. "Some of the fellows, who have been to other schools say they aren't half bad, but you see, this one has all new teachers this year, and though it used to be fine a few years ago, it's not so any more. You see father thought it was the same or he wouldn't have sent me there." One thing that Eleanor liked about Rock was his loyalty to her Uncle Heath.

The days passed quickly enough and when Christmas eve came around Eleanor, Rock, Mr. and Mrs. Heath Dallas were to see the tree at Aunt Nellie's. A fine affair it was, and it made a great show in the dining-room where it stood. Florence had several brothers and sisters and it seemed a big family to Eleanor, for, first, there was Kitty, the eldest daughter who was sixteen, and then came Marian, and next Florence, who was not quite ten, and then the three younger

children, Lee and Gertrude, and Ted, the baby. This youngest member of the family was not old enough to do much more than laugh and coo at the shining tree, but Lee and Gertrude were just of the age to most appreciate the glittering glories of stars and rings and balls and glistening baubles.

The presents were not to be given till the next morning, although little Gertrude insisted upon making every one guess what she had for him or her, and in most cases managed to convey the information as to what it was. And then, because Rock said he was not going to hang up his stocking because he was too big to do such babyish things, his mother yielded to Florence's pleading for Eleanor's company for over night, promising that she should not even be asked to stay to breakfast if she could but be on hand to hang up her stocking with the rest.

"Don't you dare to stay too long," said Rock. "We're going to have our presents right after breakfast, aren't you, mamma?"

Mrs. Dallas looked at her husband. "Unless you and Eleanor can wait till evening when we have the tree."

"Oh, pshaw! that's too long to wait," Rock declared. Then seeing his mother's expression, he asked, "Is there any particular reason for it, mother?"

"Yes, I must confess, there is."

"Then I'll wait, if Dimple will, but it's a good deal to ask of a fellow."

"I'll wait," said Dimple cheerfully.

"Then I'll come over for you some time after breakfast," Rock told her, "and I'll see the presents over here and have the fun of that."

"I think Rock was just dear to do that," said Florence after he had gone. "I did so want you to stay with me to-night. Come, let's go right to bed, Dimple."

"We want to hang up our stockings first."

"Oh, of course. Mamma has some white ones, real big long ones, that she keeps on purpose. You know every one of the family has a stocking on Christmas morning."

"I am always going to hang up mine," Eleanor declared; "even after I am grown up and am married. I hope we shall live near each other then, don't you?"

Florence replied that she did and they hurried

off to bed after seeing the stockings securely hung up by the nursery chimney-piece.

Although they were so filled with excitement that they kept awake much longer than usual, they dropped to sleep at last and awoke at the sound of the man attending to the furnace in the cellar.

"It's morning," whispered Florence. "Get up, Dimple, we must go and get our stockings, and then we'll come back to bed and look at them."

"It is so dark," said Eleanor, also in a whisper, "are you sure it is morning?"

"Yes, I hear John at the furnace, so I know. Put something round you, or you may get cold. Oh dear, I believe I am going to cough, and I don't want to wake up Gertrude and sister and the others." She buried her face in the pillow and managed to choke down the paroxysm to some extent, and then they wrapped themselves up warmly and tiptoed through the silent hall to the nursery where the row of stockings hung.

"Here is mine," said Florence in a whisper, after feeling around for a moment, "and here is yours. Don't they feel lovely and bumpy? Let's fly back with them before any one hears

us." But this was not accomplished for Lee's quick ears heard them and he scrambled out of bed and downstairs he came to get his stocking. Then came more scrambling and whispering and giggling till all the stockings were in the possession of their rightful owners, and the owners then proceeded to snuggle back beneath the covers to examine their treasures.

Florence and Eleanor found the usual supply of cakes and candies and such things; away down in the toe they discovered a bright penny and on top of each stuffed stocking was placed a pretty little doll about three inches long. These were dressed in long clothes and wore, each, a tiny cap and cloak.

"Aren't they precious little things," said Eleanor, to whom a doll always appealed. "Florence, aren't you dying to know what other presents you have?"

"Yes, I am puzzled, for in the corner of the nursery, where our presents are always put, mamma has set up the largest screen, and so I know there is something big behind it, but I can't guess whom it may be for, and it is so lovely to think it may be for me."

Their curiosity in this direction was soon gratified, for it was really later than it appeared to be, for it was a dark morning and breakfast was announced before they were dressed. To be sure, it did not much matter, for all the children, except Lee, were too excited to eat much, and Mr. Graham said he supposed the contents of the stockings took the place of breakfast.

"We didn't eat anything but two cakes and two pieces of candy," Florence declared. "Lee has eaten half of what he had." But that did not prevent Lee from entirely enjoying his chicken and waffles, and the girls at last insisted that they could not wait all day for him. Therefore a procession was formed with Mr. Graham at the head, and they marched upstairs to the nursery. The screen was swung to one side, and there before the delighted eyes of Florence and Eleanor was displayed a pretty little doll-house, completely furnished from top to bottom. It had three rooms above and three below. In the parlor were a lady and a gentleman doll. The lady was sitting down and held a little boy doll in her lap. In the kitchen was a black cook who was immediately dubbed Sylvy, by Florence.

"Dimple hasn't looked at her own presents yet," said Marian, too much interested herself to see Florence's delight to look at her own gifts.

"Why, where are they?" Eleanor asked.

"There, before the door of the doll-house."

Eleanor looked eagerly around and true enough there stood a cunning little coach, drawn by two prancing horses and inside sat another lady and gentleman with their little son. "Aren't they dear?" cried Eleanor. "Oh, Florence, did you ever dream of having anything so lovely? Such cunning little people and to think we have the two families! can't we have the loveliest times? Oh, Aunt Nellie, I think you are a darling to do this for me. I never had a papa doll before and this one is so fine; he has such a lovely moustache."

Kitty laughed. "If you knew what a time we had to get a gentleman the proper size to fit the little house, you would not wonder that you have never possessed such a rare creature."

"Now, I want to know just who gave everything," said Florence.

"Papa gave the house; mamma furnished it, and I gave the dolls and dressed them, all but

cook, and Marian gave that. Lee gave the little piano; he wanted to have a hand in furnishing the house."

"I don't see how you all kept the secret so well; I never dreamed of such a surprise," Florence acknowledged.

"Now, about mine," said Eleanor.

"Your coach is from mamma and the lady and gentleman from me," Kitty told her. "You haven't seen papa's present, have you?"

"No, are there any more?" And Eleanor's heart was further warmed by the gift of a set of books that she had long wanted.

The doll-house was so fascinating that when Rock arrived he could scarcely persuade Eleanor to go back home with him, and, indeed, he was so well pleased with the gift that he said he did not wonder the girls did not want to leave it, and he offered to go tell his mother that Eleanor was having such a good time that she would rather stay the rest of the day if she might. Aunt Dora appreciated the situation and sent word that she might remain, but to be sure to be back by five o'clock, and even then Rock found it hard to persuade her that it was time to go, and

that if they didn't hurry they might miss something. Then Eleanor at last tore herself away, leaving her gifts behind her.

"It seems queer not to go to church on Christmas day," she said as she and Rock were on their way home. "Was the church very pretty?"

"Beautiful," Rock answered heartily, "and so was the music. It is too bad that you had to stay away. You ought to have seen Bubbles with her stocking. She was delighted, and she has hardly touched a thing in it because she wants to show it to you."

"And to think," said Eleanor, "I had to stay away from her all Christmas day. I don't believe it has ever happened before."

"She had a good time," Rock assured her, "she has had all the nice things that were good for her, and she knows she is to see you very soon."

"In a week, the doctor said, I did so hope she could come to-day." She gave a little sigh, but Rock began to joke with her, and they reached the corner before she knew it.

CHAPTER X

A Happy New Year

It was quite dark when they reached home, and Eleanor saw that even in the large guest chamber there was a brilliant light. "Oh, the company has come," she exclaimed.

"Pshaw!" said Rock, "they got here before us after all."

Eleanor held back a little as she heard voices in the parlor, but before she could see who was there out came some one who picked her up, and gave her a mighty hug. "Grandfather!" she exclaimed. "Oh, grandfather! I didn't dream it was you. Why, you are not a stranger."

"Why, yes he is," Rock put in. "Mother and I never saw him in our lives till to-day."

"Why, of course," said Eleanor, "I forgot that he was in Europe when Uncle Heath was married. Oh, grandpa, did you bring grandma? and where is she?"

"Upstairs; she'll be down directly."

"And did you come all the way from Birmingham to-day?"

"Not to-day, but we reached here to-day. I tried to get here yesterday but we were detained just twelve hours beyond the time we expected and so we came lagging along about sundown."

"It is such a lovely surprise," Eleanor repeated, snuggling up to him. Then her grandma came in and there was another welcome to be given.

Then, and this was a surprise too, when Eleanor turned from her grandma who should be standing in the doorway but Bubbles. Since she was recovering rapidly the doctors thought she might be allowed to spend Christmas away from the hospital, as Mrs. Dallas made it a special request. "Oh, Bubbles, Bubbles, I am so glad to see you," Eleanor cried. "Why, how long have you been here?"

"I come 'bout fo' o'clock. Miss Dora she come an' fetched me. I gwine back to-morrer, but in a week I kin come away fo' good an' all."

"And do you feel well?"

"Yass, miss, tol'able. I ain't just quite well, but I mos'."

"But oh, suppose you haven't had whooping-cough."

"Miss Dora say I has. She tooken an' write to Sylvy an' Sylvy she say I has it when I a baby."

"Oh, then, that is all right."

Then dinner was announced, and Eleanor who had already eaten her fill, regretted that she had tried to crowd two Christmasses into one day, but there was no help for it, a second dinner could not possibly be eaten, and she could only nibble at the good things provided.

After dinner came the excitement of the second tree, which was dazzling enough to satisfy any one, and then the presents were distributed, such an array of them that Eleanor never remembered having so many. Books, two new Jungle Books, and a set of Miss Alcott's works, besides several other entertaining stories; a pretty set of furs, and many other things. Bubbles was not forgotten by any one, and had a pile of presents almost as big as Eleanor's. As for Rock, with his new wheel, skates, a fine little kodak, and books in great number, he was very happy.

"It has been such a lovely Christmas," said Eleanor, "and I did not see how it could be, a

month ago. Aunt Dora, isn't it strange what a difference it makes whether people love you or not?" And these were the last words any one heard from her that night, for, in five minutes she was fast asleep.

The last night of the old year brought another joyful surprise for Eleanor. Bubbles had that day arrived from the hospital, her arm still in a sling, but she was otherwise quite herself. Aunt Dora assured her that she should remain under her roof till Eleanor's parents should return, and Bubbles, who was a grateful little soul, did her best to show appreciation, constituting herself Miss Dora's special messenger. "I was sassy, Miss Dora," she confessed; "'deed I was, but I ain't sassy to folks 'at treats me good, an' I jus' run my legs off fo' yuh, ef yuh wants me to."

"It's bad enough for you to have nearly run your arm off," returned Mrs. Dallas smiling.

"It's great fun to have you and Bubbles here," Rock declared. "Aren't we just going to have a warm old time?" And indeed, it was a happy holiday week, for, although they were cut off from many outside frolics, they could have plenty of fun at home, especially since

Grandpa and Grandma Dallas were always ready to add their share to the amusements. It was grandpa, himself, who suggested the kind of party which whooping-cough patients could have. Aunt Nellie agreed heartily and sent out invitations to the hospital where Bubbles had been, and all the children who were suffering from whooping-cough or who had been through the ordeal and who could go out, were invited to a Punch and Judy show the last day of the old year. Grandpa added to the performance a magic-lantern show which gave great delight. It was a funny sort of party, but the children all enjoyed it.

"We won't put on our very best frocks," said Florence, "because we mustn't dress better than the company. We are going to have jelly and little plain cakes for the refreshments and we're going to give a little doll to each of the girls and a game to each of the boys, for favors."

"I think that is a fine kind of party," said Rock. "I like it much better than the other kind."

The guests all enjoyed themselves so heartily and spread such reports among their friends that

grandpa said it was too bad that other children who were unable to leave the hospital, but who were well enough to be entertained in a similar way, could not enjoy the little show, therefore he and Rock decided to give their services to the entertainment of these other children the next week, so Florence's first idea brought abundant fruit.

It was late in the afternoon, after the little guests had departed that Eleanor's surprise came. She and Rock and Florence were sitting before the library fire when some one opened the door and a voice asked: "Where is my daughter?"

"Here I am, mamma," Florence answered.

Then there was a little laugh and some one came forward in the dusk, some one whose familiar form made Eleanor, as she turned her head, spring to her feet. "It is my mamma! It is my mamma!" she cried, flinging herself in the dear arms stretched out ready to clasp her. And then who should walk into the room, quite erect, and without any crutches at all, but Eleanor's papa.

"Oh, when did you come? When did you come?" cried the child, her voice shaking with excitement.

ing-school again, since he had such a sorry experience the last time, but if you could take him in with your young folks it would relieve our minds, besides being a good thing for him, Miss Reese is a very competent teacher, I judge."

"She is an excellent teacher," his brother assured him. And the matter was considered settled.

"Does Cousin Ellen know you are coming home, mamma?" Eleanor asked.

"Yes, she knows, and she has taken a little house on the other side of town."

"Oh!" Eleanor's face was a sight to see, between her desire to seem pleased and her real feeling of disappointment.

Her mother hugged her tightly and said: "Never mind Cousin Ellen, now you have your mother."

Eleanor gave a great sigh of content and rested her head against her mother's arm. "Dearest mamma, the next time you go away I shall get into one of the trunks rather than be left behind. You don't know, you never will know, how horrid Cousin Ellen can be."

"Don't I? Perhaps I do. At all events, my

darling, she will not be near enough to bother you."

"No, and now I am rather glad I am not to go back to school, for then I should have to see Olive all the time, and she does try to set the girls against me. Am I a very bad child, mamma?"

"You are not perfect, sweetheart, but I don't believe you are as naughty as Cousin Ellen would have us think."

In a few days they started for home, a merry party, Eleanor, her father and mother, Florence, Rock and Bubbles. As they came near the house Eleanor glanced up at the window where poor Ada had hung so helplessly. She looked over at the little playhouse, then she turned to Rock. "Oh, Rock," she said, "I am so glad you are not Don."

Sylvy, smiling and neat, met them at the door, and before twenty-four hours all was as it had been before Cousin Ellen had come. Yet, it took Eleanor a little while to adjust herself to the belief that there were no hard words nor cold looks to greet her, and once or twice she cried out in the night so pitifully as to bring her

mother to her side to awaken her from a nightmare in which she said she thought Cousin Ellen was holding her while Don stuck pins in her.

One of the first visitors was Dr. Sullivan, who greeted Eleanor with: "Heigho, little girl! back again? Plenty of fresh air, remember. Another patient is this, Miss Florence? A comrade in misery. Well, keep out of doors all you can."

And then came Miss Reese for sympathy, as she said, and she seemed so glad to see Eleanor that the child felt that here was one person, at least, who believed in her. "I'm so glad you can come and teach us, Miss Reese," she told her. "I think it will be a dear little school. We are to study in the library, mamma says, and I think it will be great fun."

Mrs. Dallas had just come in from a walk. "What do you think, daughter? Cousin Ellen wants to know if I will let Don and Olive and Jessie join our little class."

Eleanor looked horror-stricken and her mother laughed as she asked, "What did you say, mamma?"

"I said no, and I said it very emphatically.

Cousin Ellen says the three older children have had the whooping-cough and she fears it for none of them but Alma. I said: "I do not think the arrangement would be at all a satisfactory one, Cousin Ellen, and we will not consider it."

Just here Bubbles came in saying: "Miss Dimple, Mr. Snyder out hyah."

"Oh!" Eleanor jumped up. "Please 'scuse me, Miss Reese, I must see my dear butterman. Come, Florence, come, Rock." And she ran out to greet her old friend, who shook both her hands and said: "Mrs. Snyder heard you was comin' home and she wants to know if you won't come out some day with your cousins and the little colored girl. Some Saturday. If you take the electric cars to Brookside it will be just a little walk across the fields. Mrs. Snyder wants to hear all about what has been happening and I've got a little colt to show you; one of the finest in the land. Come next Saturday, if it ain't too cold," he said as he drove away.

"They were so good to me, you will let us go, won't you, mamma?" Eleanor asked when she went into her mother.

"Of course, dear, you may go. I am more

than grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Snyder for their kindness to you, and I would not refuse to have you accept their invitation for anything."

"And you'll take butter from them again?"

"Most certainly. Now run along, Miss Reese and I have some matters we want to talk over."

"I can't find the key to the playhouse," said Eleanor, coming back in a minute.

"Can't you? Well, never mind, wait till to-morrow before you go there. Suppose you get Bubbles to help you and Florence to put your clothing neatly in the bureau drawers."

"And then shall we help Rock to put his away?"

"Yes."

But upon being consulted, Rock said, "I did that myself."

Eleanor looked at him admiringly and Florence said, "I didn't know boys ever did such things; my brother doesn't."

"Because somebody does it for him, I suppose, but my mother says there's no reason why a boy shouldn't be as smart as a girl about finding things and keeping them in order."

"I wish my mother would say that to Lee,"

returned Florence; "he always throws his things anywhere and we girls have to find them for him and put them away."

"Well," said Rock, "I wouldn't let a girl do that for me."

Eleanor was sitting on the floor hugging her knees, her eyes roving around the room. Presently she jumped up and began a frantic dance. "What is the matter?" asked Florence in wonder.

"I'm glad, just so glad that I can't help it," Eleanor told her. "When I think it is Rock and not Don who is in the little room, and that you are here instead of Olive, I could scream with joy."

"We haven't been to the playhouse yet," said Florence.

"No, mamma said to wait till to-morrow."

"Why?"

"I don't know. She just said so. I don't suppose there is any reason."

"I believe there is," said Florence mysteriously.

"Oh, why?"

"Because I saw your papa come out of there with a man."

"Oh, well, we'll see to-morrow. I'm not going to guess about it. Let us go downstairs. There comes Doctor Sullivan again, oh, and Miss Reese is going. She will be here to-morrow to begin lessons. Doctor Sullivan is not coming in. Miss Reese is going with him in the buggy."

The next day did solve the mystery of the playhouse, for it appeared that the place had been repaired and put in perfect order. The man, whom Florence saw, had been putting in a pane of glass which Don had broken. "It looks nicer than ever," said Eleanor admiringly. "I am so glad papa had it made so new and clean, I feel as if all the Don of it were gone now." The words were hardly out of her mouth before Don's form appeared in the doorway. Eleanor drew herself up stiffly. "Well?" she said.

Don looked rather sheepish, but he said: "I just thought I would come over."

Eleanor said nothing.

"Say, I left my knife out here," began Don.

"When?"

"Oh, a long time ago. I want to come in and look for it."

"You can't come in. I will look for it. I

don't believe it is here though, for it's been ever and ever so long since you were in here."

"I don't care, I'm coming in. I'd like to see any girl keep me out."

At this Rock came forward. He had been sitting in a corner where Don could not see him. "Then perhaps, a boy can keep you out," he said calmly. "This is Eleanor's house and she has a right to do as she chooses about it. If you have left anything here, go up to the house and tell Mrs. Dallas, or Mr. Dallas either. They will see that you get it."

Don stood for a moment irresolute and then walked away, but a few minutes later they heard a sharp cry of pain and they all rushed out to see Bubbles sitting on the ground sobbing and holding her wounded arm.

"Oh, Bubbles, Bubbles," cried Eleanor, running up to her, "what is it?"

"Dat Don he come an' gimme a lick 'fore I knowed he was anywhere about, and he knocked me over and hurt mah arm, he did."

Rock's eyes snapped. "I'll get even with him," he muttered, "the little bully."

"Does your arm hurt you very much?" asked

Florence anxiously. "Come, let's go to the doctor right away."

"We'll tell mamma first," said Eleanor. This done, Mrs. Dallas did decide that the doctor would best be seen and they set out at once for his office, fortunately finding him at home. He found nothing serious had happened, but he frowned when told of the sudden and uncalled-for attack upon Bubbles, and shook his head, looking sharply at Rock as if he might be suspected of being at fault in the matter, so that Eleanor spoke up and said, "Rock sent him off, doctor, and I suppose that's what made him mad. Uncle Heath said he didn't think that Don was really a bad boy, but I think he is a very bad boy."

The doctor smiled at her emphatic way of speaking and said that he would call in the morning and see if Bubbles were all right. Indeed, it seemed that he generally found his way to the house every day, and about the time that Miss Reese took her leave after lesson hours.

Saturday proved to be as fine a day as could be expected in January, and the four children, Bubbles included, started for Mr. Snyder's.

Florence and Rock had never been there before, and were delighted to go whizzing along through the country which was really very beautiful, even in winter, for it is not alone when trees are green, that hills and dales are fair to see.

They had been traveling for some time when Eleanor said, "You told the conductor to let us off at Brookside, didn't you, Rock? That place we just passed looked like it, but I am not sure if it is the place."

"I told him," returned Rock, "but maybe he forgot. I'll ask him." This he did to find that they had passed the place and were told that it wasn't very far and they could walk back.

"I call that pretty cool," said Rock as they scrambled down from the car, "but we've got to make the best of it, I suppose."

They trudged along for a little distance when suddenly they came to a high trestle before which Eleanor stood aghast. "I never can go over that," she declared.

"Oh, yes, you can," said Rock. "I'll walk ahead and take your two hands," but Eleanor shrank from such a proceeding.

"I couldn't! I couldn't," she insisted, "it

makes me sick to think of it, and then suppose a car should come along."

"No, they only come every half hour, and it is a single track so the down car doesn't start till the up car gets to the terminus, the conductor told me, so that's all right," Rock tried to reassure her by saying.

But Eleanor was firm and at last clambered down the embankment and discovered a place narrow enough for her to cross the little stream running below. Bubbles fearfully followed, and they managed to scramble up the bank, reaching the other side almost as soon as Rock and Florence. But this was not the end of their adventures.

CHAPTER XI

Don and a Pony

THE day was unusually pleasant for the season, and the children as they journeyed along saw that they were not the only ones who had sought the country. Ahead of them were three boys who were going in the direction of Mr. Snyder's.

"One of those boys looks like Don," said Florence; "I wonder what he is doing out here. Do you know who the others are, Dimple?"

"No, I don't believe I do, though one of them looks like Joe Forrester."

"Is he the brother of the girl you told me about?"

"Yes, but I don't know him. See, they are turning off here and that is Mr. Snyder's house over there."

"I hope those boys aren't going there."

"I don't believe they are; the boys from town go wandering all about in the woods and places

about here. I don't believe Don would want to go to Mr. Snyder's."

But in this she was mistaken, for, after they had spent a pleasant hour with Mrs. Snyder and had eaten a hearty and good dinner, they heard a great commotion outside whither Mr. Snyder had gone to bring up his pretty little colt to show the children.

"Mr. Snyder thinks as much of that colt as if it were a baby," Mrs. Snyder told them, "and it is a pretty creature. The land's sake! What's all that to do?"

They all ran out on the porch to see Mr. Snyder with a squirming boy firmly held by the collar, while Lem was leading off the colt which was limping and seemed in some way hurt.

"Ben, Ben, what's the matter?" cried Mrs. Snyder running down the steps.

"Matter enough," he answered, "just wait till I get this youngster settled and I'll tell you."

The children peeping over the balustrade of the porch, saw a very wrathful countenance, yet Eleanor's sympathies were about to go out to the captured boy when suddenly she exclaimed: "Oh, Florence! Oh, Rock! It is Don."

Sure enough, Don it was, and the angry man who held him prisoner brought the boy up on the porch saying: "Here's a fine fellow for you. He'll cost me a pretty penny, but I'll make him suffer."

"Why, Ben, what has he done?" inquired Mrs. Snyder.

"Done? Done enough. Him and a couple of other rascals that's got away, worse luck, have come near ruining my colt and have played havoc with your frames out there, mother."

"Not my violet frames?"

"Yes, that's right. You see, I let Dandy out into the back lot for a run, seeing that it was such a fine day, and them fellows thought it would be great fun to scare him to see him run, so they crept under the fence and shied something at him, and he ran and jumped the fence, or tried to, for he caught himself on that wire fence by the garden and after struggling a while he got loose and went crashing through the frames. I don't know how bad the colt's hurt, but I know how bad the boy's going to be." He gave Don a shake and the boy, white with terror, began to beg for mercy.

For all the wrongs she had suffered at Don's hands were still fresh in Eleanor's memory, she began to feel very sorry for the culprit, and she said softly, "Maybe it wasn't Don that did it, Mr. Snyder. Maybe it was one of the other boys, the ones who ran away."

"Don? Is that this fellow's name? Do you know him?"

"Why, yes, he is Donald Murdoch. Don't you remember Cousin Ellen Murdoch, who lived in our house? He is her son."

"Yes, yes," Mr. Snyder slightly loosened his grip upon Donald and appeared to be considering the matter. After a moment's pause he spoke again. "This is the youngster then, who caused you so much trouble I suppose."

"Ye-es," Eleanor answered reluctantly.

"Pestered the little darky so she had to leave and was the cause of her getting a broken arm?" He gave Donald a shake that made the boy's teeth chatter.

"Yes," spoke up Florence, for Eleanor was silent, "and he tried to hurt Bubbles again just a day or two ago." Mr. Snyder's grip on the boy's shoulder made the boy wince.

"Told lies about you; took your playhouse and helped himself to anything he wanted without so much as a 'by your leave,' didn't he?" Mr. Snyder kept up his remarks to Eleanor.

"Oh, yes," Eleanor found her voice again, "but his mother would feel so dreadfully about it if you send him to jail."

Mr. Snyder's face relaxed some of its grimness. "Come in here, all of you," he said, "and we'll have a little trial by jury. Here, boy, stand there. Don't you dare to budge one inch or it will be the worse for you. You and your companions have trespassed on my property, and have injured a valuable colt for me besides doing other damage. I am going to sift the matter to the very bottom, and if you don't tell the truth you'll get such a whipping as you never had. Now, sir, speak up; let's hear your story. Did you or didn't you throw stones at the colt?"

Don glanced around. He saw a set of stern faces, only in Eleanor's eyes was a pitying look. He began to cry softly and she took a step forward but Mr. Snyder waved her back. "Wait a minute. Tell me, boy, did you throw the stone that hit the colt?"

"The other fellows did, too," replied Don.

"Never mind about them. We'll settle their hash later on. I am dealing with you now. Did you?"

"Yes," Don admitted reluctantly.

"Well then, you are liable to one-third damages, supposing the others are equally guilty."

"Oh," Eleanor exclaimed, "Mr. Snyder, will it be a great deal?"

"A matter of fifty dollars without the colt; if he's not seriously hurt, but I'm afraid that, at the best, he is so scratched that he wouldn't bring the price I might have got for him. Now then, boy, I'm inclined to trounce you well. You need a whipping the worst kind."

Donald cried woefully, and Eleanor looked ready to cry, herself. "Oh, please, Mr. Snyder," she began.

He looked at her and smiled. "Then, Don, down on your knees and beg this young lady's pardon for treating her like a cub. Here before us all, down with you."

Donald did not hesitate, but began to mumble something. "Oh, no, no, please," Eleanor interrupted him, feeling the shame of it tingling to

her very ears. "Never mind, now, Mr. Snyder. I don't care. It is all over and past and, please, never mind."

"All right. Get up, boy, you've Dimple to thank for being let off from a thrashing, but I'll march you to your mother and you will tell a straight story before her or I'll know the reason why." And Donald, cowed and miserable, was taken directly back to town, and was marched into his mother's presence.

Mr. Snyder told his tale curtly. "I've plenty of witnesses," he said, "and I know what I'm talking about. I've got to have this made right or I'll go to law about it."

"I am sure my boy never had a hand in it," returned Mrs. Murdoch stiffly.

"Your boy did, by his own confession. Here, sir, tell your mother all about it." And Mrs. Murdoch was an unwilling listener to an account of the disaster.

"I never would have believed it," she said in a distressed tone, "but Mr. Snyder, I am sure he didn't mean to hurt your horse, and besides those other boys led him on, I am sure."

"He threw the first stone and he was the ring-

leader," persisted Mr. Snyder. "I've three witnesses to prove it."

"I know who they are," said Don, feeling safe under the shelter of his mother's wing; "it was Florence and Eleanor and that boy they call Rock."

"Oh," Mrs. Murdoch said significantly, "if they were concerned in it, the whole tale is probably a fabrication."

"Which it isn't," Mr. Snyder declared. "They never one of them saw it, all of them being in my house behind closed doors when it happened. The ones who saw it were two of my neighbors and my man, Lem Hawkins who shouted to them to stop and couldn't get there in time to prevent mischief. Ain't you a pretty sneaking little cur?" he said turning to Don. "I'd like to know who it was that begged you off. Tell your mother how it comes that you escaped a sound whipping. And that brings up another thing, ma'am. My wife and I are mighty fond of that little gal, Dimple Dallas, and we don't mean to stand by and have her blamed for others' bad actions. Just out with it, boy, and tell your mother how you plagued the life out of her and

that little Bubbles, and don't forget to put in how she begged you off to-day. No shirking; a plain, straightforward story." He shook his head in a terrifying manner at Don who spluttered and stammered out a confession which satisfied his stern judge, but which his mother would fain have had left unsaid, for finally she stopped him with "That will do, Donald. I am sure you had some provocation. I don't excuse you altogether, of course, but there are always two sides to a question."

"Just so," said Mr. Snyder, "and it won't be my fault if every one doesn't hear both. Now, ma'am, are you ready to pay me twenty dollars for the damage this boy has caused? I'm letting you off easy at that."

Mrs. Murdoch looked aghast. "Pay twenty dollars! Why, I couldn't think of it. I am in very straitened circumstances, and oh, Mr. Snyder, you surely will not press such a claim for a mere piece of fun. Boys will be boys."

"And law's law. I'm going to have that made good."

"You'll not go to law about it."

"Perhaps."

Mrs. Murdoch was so evidently distressed that finally Mr. Snyder who was too good-hearted to insist upon ready money, made a proposition that Donald should work out the amount. "I have a pretty good patch of berries every year," he said, "and I always have to hire a few pickers. Now, I'll be easy with you, but it is only right that the boy should be made to do something about this, and I shall expect him to work out every dollar." This arrangement was finally agreed upon, for Donald thought he would rather enjoy a free time among the strawberry beds, and he was so relieved at getting off thus easily that he was ready to give Eleanor credit for all her influence in his behalf. So that Mrs. Murdoch began to think that, after all, she might have misjudged Eleanor.

This was the end of any trouble with Don, so far as Eleanor was concerned, and indeed, so far as it affected others, for he needed just such a lesson and after many days of wearisome, back-breaking work among the strawberry beds, work which Mr. Snyder made in no way easy for him, he realized that one must respect the property of others, and that in this world a person cannot be

allowed his own way without regard to the rights of others.

But the rest of the winter passed happily enough. In the spring came Grandpa and Grandma Dallas, and thinking that his little granddaughter looked rather thin and pale, grandpa consulted his son with the result that Eleanor was told that her grandfather meant to buy her a little Shetland pony that she might spend the greater part of her time out in the fresh air without getting too tired.

"Do you hear? Oh, Rock! Oh, Florence, do you hear?" cried Eleanor, upon being told the news. "Oh, grandpa, when will you get it?"

"As soon as we can find one that is gentle and well-trained," he answered smiling. "Do you know of any one who has such a pony for sale?"

"No, not now. I did know a darling of a pony; it was Zula's, that little gipsy girl's. Oh, if the gipsies were here, perhaps they would have one to sell. They had one and Zula wanted me to buy it."

"I am afraid they would be rather unreliable people to buy from," her grandfather said.

"Oh, but they are really not so bad. Zula

loved her brother dearly and her pony too, and they were very good to Bubbles."

"Oh, yes, Bubbles, to be sure. Bring her in and let us hear what she has to say of them. Perhaps they will be coming this way after a while and we can see what they have to sell. It must be about time for them to be getting up this way from the south."

"Yass, suh, dey fust-rate to me," said Bubbles, upon being questioned. "Dey had a mess o' hosses, an' a teenty little pony like de one Miss Dimple tell you-all about. Hit were a good one, too, 'cause I heered dat Marco, dey call him, when he fetch de pony in, an' he say to de little gal: 'I got a pony mos' as good as yo'n,' an' she say she don't believe it, an' he say 'sho.'"

"Well," said grandpa, "I'll look about and see what we can find, and if the gipsies come this way we'll hunt them up, and find out what they have."

It was lovely weather and the children had all so far recovered from their illness as to be able to return to school, since Miss Reese, too, was to take her place there after the Easter holidays. "I hope Miss Reese will stay," said Eleanor,

"for I love her, mamma. Do you think she will teach at that school as long as I go there?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Why?"

"I don't think Dr. Sullivan will let her."

"Dr. Sullivan?" Eleanor looked puzzled, but presently it dawned upon her what her mother meant. "Oh, mamma, is that why he used to come every day about noon to take Miss Reese home? I thought how kind he was," she said in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, wasn't he kind?"

"Yes, to himself."

Mrs. Dallas laughed and said she must tell the doctor and Miss Reese that.

"Do you think Aunt Nellie will want Florence to come home after Easter?"

"No, I think she will be very glad to have her remain where she can be out of doors more than she could be in the city."

"And can she stay all summer?"

"Yes, if her mother doesn't find that she cannot be parted so long from her. You know you and I wanted to see each other very much after a two months' separation."

"Yes, but Aunt Nellie has such a lot of other children and you had only me."

"Yes, but Florence has but one mamma, you know."

"I hadn't thought of that," Eleanor returned. "Well, Florence can go home and stay a week and then come back again. Can't she do that?"

"Perhaps so."

Just then Florence came in with her doll Rubina in her arms. "Hurry up, Dimple," she said. "Get your hat; your grandpa is going to take us out to drive. The gipsies have come and are camping in the same place Bubbles says."

"Oh, I am so glad. Are you going to take Rubina?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll take Celestine. Ada, my dear, you must stay at home, for Celestine and Rubina are such friends, you know. Mamma, may Ada sit in your room with you? I am afraid she will get lonely without me."

"I shall be very pleased to have her company," Mrs. Dallas replied. "I have noticed that she is an extremely well-behaved child and never

meddles with my things when you leave her in my room."

"Is grandpa here? Is the carriage waiting?" Eleanor asked Florence.

"No, not yet. Your grandpa and Rock have gone to get it."

"Oh, then we will have time to change the dolls' dresses. I want Zula to see them looking their best. What can I take Zula, mamma?"

"Are you sure you will see her?"

"Why yes, I suppose she is with these gipsies."

"Perhaps it is not the same company."

"Oh, well, I'll take something anyway. May I have some daffodils out of the garden? I can give them to some one else if Zula is not there."

"You may have some of them."

"Rock is going to take his camera and see if he can get some snap-shots of the gipsies," Florence told them.

"Won't that be fine? Good-bye dearest, loveliest mamma. I wish you were going too."

"I couldn't very well go this morning. I have several things to attend to at home."

Over the same way that Eleanor had traveled

with weary feet that November day, they went this fair morning in April, and it was not long before they saw ahead of them the gaily painted wagons of the gipsies. "There they are!" cried Florence. "Can we drive up real close? I never saw a gipsy camp before. I think the people look very queer."

"I shouldn't mind traveling around the country in a wagon like that," Rock declared, as he caught sight of the odd little houses on wheels.

"Now we are going to stop," said Eleanor. "Grandpa, will you ask if Zula is here. I want to see her."

But grandpa was attracted by the sight of a little pony under a tree. He nodded to one of the men lounging near, and asked him: "Is that pony for sale?"

The man looked around uncertainly. "Marco is boss. I'll tell him," he said; and a grave-faced young man soon came up to the carriage.

"I'm inquiring about that little pony," said grandpa. "Is he for sale?"

"No, I don't sell him. He belonged to my little sister. I don't take a thousand dollars for him. My little sister's horse he was."

"Oh," Eleanor leaned forward. "Was it Zula's pony? Where is Zula?"

The young man looked down. "She has died this winter."

"Oh!" Eleanor drew back. "I wanted to see her. Are you Marco, her brother?"

"Her brother," he replied. "Where have you known my little sister?"

"I saw her here last fall. Don't you remember? And the little colored girl you took to the hospital? She is well now. You were very kind to Bubbles. Won't you have these flowers? I brought them to Zula." And she held out the yellow daffodils.

The young man took them. "Thank you. I am glad to see you. I would like to sell you the pony if I could sell him to any one, but I cannot. He was Zula's, but I have another one here as good. I sell him for one hundred twenty-five dollars." He turned to Mr. Dallas.

"That is a pretty good price, but let us see him," said grandpa.

"I am so sorry that Zula is not here," said Eleanor softly, "but, you know, she is up in heaven and she must be very happy."

The young man turned and looked at her. It seemed as if the tears were very near his eyes as he walked away.

Presently he returned leading a little shaggy pony which he declared he could recommend as being gentle and perfectly safe. "I would not wish to sell to Zula's friend a pony not good," he said earnestly. "Is it for the little girl here?"

"Yes, for her!" grandpa told him.

"He is one year older than the other, but he is perhaps no worse for that, for he is easy in harness and very gentle to ride. If you like him I sell him for one hundred and twenty dollars."

Mr. Dallas asked many questions, got out of the carriage, and examined the docile little creature very carefully, and finally offered one hundred dollars for the pony. "I will do this," said the young man. "We are here for three or four days. I will bring you the pony this evening, and you can keep him long enough to try him all you want, and if he does not prove all I say you can return him, but if he does I will sell him for one hundred and ten dollars."

This seemed so fair an offer that Mr. Dallas, at last accepted it, and that evening the little pony arrived to remain as Eleanor's very own, for he proved to be as tractable and good a little creature as could be desired.

CHAPTER XII

A May Party

AFTER the little pony was fairly established in his new home, Grandma Dallas declared that she was not to be outdone by grandpa, and to make the present quite complete she would add a pony-cart; and then three merrier children could not be found than Eleanor, Florence, and Rock as they drove out, the pony scampering unweariedly over many a mile. It seemed no distance now to Mr. Snyder's and many a call did the good butterman and his wife receive from the children.

But as the first of May approached an event was promised which threatened to cast all other interests in the shade. Florence and Eleanor had started to one school after Easter, and Rock to another. Eleanor was welcomed back with open arms by most of the girls, but Olive and Janet still held aloof, and did not join her special company of friends. "She's so stuck up, now

that she has a pony, that she can hardly see," Eleanor heard Janet say one day, for Eleanor was not above giving her head a little toss and looking supreme contempt at the speaker whenever they met. "And it isn't because I've a pony," she told Florence, "but I just despise her anyhow."

That very day Miss Reese made an announcement which set all the class astir. "Since I do not expect to return to you next year, girls," she said, "I thought we would have a little frolic before we part, and I have planned to go a-Maying. But not on the first of May," she added. "We will wait till it is warm enough to go with no danger of taking cold. Now, I think it would be pleasant to try to have a real May party, with a May-pole and a May-queen and all that. Each one of you will be privileged to invite one guest, a boy if you like, for we must have some boys along, and two weeks from to-day will cast votes for the queen. That will give you time to think the matter over so you will not decide hastily. I do not think we shall want to select the prettiest, nor the wealthiest, but the one who shows the most loving disposi-

tion or the most conscientious work, or some quality of mind or heart to commend her." Not a girl but hoped that she would be selected, and not one but felt that this was one of the most exciting events that she had ever looked forward to.

"Oh, Florence, suppose one of us should be chosen," said Eleanor, as the two were walking home from school. "Wouldn't it be perfectly lovely to wear a flower crown and be dressed in white and carry a sceptre. Are you going to invite any one?"

"Why, yes, I think I will invite Rock, unless you want to."

"Oh, no, so long as he comes it will not make any difference. Oh, don't you hope you will be chosen?"

Florence was obliged to confess that she did hope so, but just how greatly she desired the honor not even Eleanor knew. Florence loved everything romantic, and it seemed to her that to be a May-queen must be the summit of human bliss. She had been so short a time at the school that she hardly dared to believe that she would stand a chance of being chosen, much as she

longed to be. She saw that her Cousin Eleanor was very popular and that she would be one of the first favorites. Olive Murdoch was an excellent student and was very careful about obeying rules, and she was in many respects the most attentive girl in the class. She had numerous friends, too, for where Olive liked any one she could make herself very agreeable, and had the qualities which made her a leader. Indeed, before the week was out, it looked as if the two who would receive the most votes were Olive and Eleanor.

"I shall vote for you," Eleanor told Florence.

"And, of course, I shall vote for you," Florence returned. "Oh, Dimple, if Olive Murdoch is chosen I don't believe I shall care to go to the May party. I should hate to call her fair queen and all that. Are we to vote for the maid of honor?"

"I don't know. Miss Reese hasn't said anything about it, but if we can choose the one we most want, and if I should be queen, I shall want you, of course."

"And I shall want you."

At last came the day when the votes were to

be given. Twenty little girls, with hearts beating fast and with hopes high, cast in their votes; a box to receive them stood on Miss Reese's desk. It seemed to the children, as they sat there with the odor of apple-blossoms drifting in through the open windows, and the fair May green before them as they looked out, that Miss Reese never had been so long over anything. She separated the slips of paper into small heaps and carefully counted each one over more than once.

At last she looked up, and smiled to see the little eager faces. "Olive Murdoch, seven votes; Eleanor Dallas, six; Florence Graham, three; Edith West, two; Leila Clark, two; Elsie Vail, one."

"Oh," came a little murmur from the class and Olive's face wore a triumphant and self-satisfied expression, while Eleanor and Florence looked at each other, reading in one another's face the disappointment written there.

Suddenly Miss Reese spoke again: "Why, this is not right; there should be but twenty votes and there are twenty-one. Some one has given two votes. Now, shall we vote over again? Shall I call upon each girl to announce her

choice? or, since there seems to be no doubt but that Olive Murdoch and Eleanor Dallas have received the greatest number of votes, shall we consider them the candidates and let the class vote over again for one or the other of these two girls? All in favor of this last plan please raise their right hands." Up went most of the right hands and Miss Reese nodded approvingly.

"Now," she said, "each girl can write her choice on a slip of paper and bring it to me, and then there will be no mistake. Jessie, give out these slips." A little flush arose to Olive's cheeks and she whispered something to the girl next her, who nodded in reply.

The room was so still that the singing of a robin outside in the apple-tree seemed the only sound to be heard. Then one by one the girls came forward with their slips of paper. Miss Reese read each one silently, and as Olive's turn came she looked up with a queer little smile at the girl who dropped her eyes and went back to her seat with a flushed face. Miss Reese again counted the votes. "This time we have just twenty," she said. "There are for Eleanor Dallas twelve votes; for Olive Murdoch, eight."

Every girl turned and looked at Eleanor whose face turned a rosy red and in her confusion she said quite loud enough for them all to hear, "Oh, Florence, I wish it had been you."

Miss Reese rapped on her desk. "Now," she said, "I think it will be best to take a different way to choose the maid of honor. Let each girl think of whom she would like and give her reason for it. I think that will make it quite interesting. You may begin, Elsie."

"I think Olive should be the one because she came so near being the queen," said Elsie.

Miss Reese nodded to the next girl who said she thought that some girl who had received no vote should be chosen.

Then came one who said: "I think Florence Graham, because she is a stranger here, and she isn't going to stay very long. I think it would be more polite to choose her." This seemed to strike the most of them favorably, and in the end Florence was made supremely happy by being elected maid of honor, and this important matter being settled, there were other questions to be discussed and the May party in all its ins and outs was talked over.

Although there were some disappointed little souls, as a rule all were well satisfied that the choice of queen had fallen where it did. Eleanor was radiantly happy and yet she could not help feeling sorry for Olive, who had counted upon being the favored one, and who gave Eleanor a look of scorn as she passed her. "She needn't look so," said Florence indignantly. "It was perfectly fair, and every one says so. I haven't a doubt but that she voted for herself," which, if the truth were known, was true, and, indeed, it was also true that the extra vote on the first ballot was cast by Olive. If Miss Reese suspected this she never said so, but she did know that Olive's name was on the slip of paper which she brought up, and that was why she gave Olive the quizzical little smile, for no other girl in the whole school had voted for herself.

Rock was jubilant when he heard the decision. "Hurrah for Queen Eleanor!" he cried. "I am just delighted, and all the more that you got ahead of Olive Murdoch."

But Eleanor looked sober when he said this. "She's dreadfully disappointed," she said, "and I'm awfully sorry for her. She studied real hard

and does her lessons so well. I sort of think that she should have been chosen."

"Why, Dimple Dallas," exclaimed Florence. "I don't see how you can say that."

"I do think so. She is the best scholar in the school."

"Yes, and she's the hatefullest and the slyest." Florence was too loyal to Eleanor to believe any good of Olive.

"Well, anyhow, Jessie is a nice child and I like her," Eleanor maintained. "She was never mean to me once, and if you were not to be my maid of honor I should choose her next." This Eleanor said to Jessie, and furthermore, invited her to go with Florence, Rock and herself to gather flowers for the arbor under which the queen was to sit. Great masses of mountain laurel, wild honeysuckle and other spring blossoms they carried home in the little pony-cart, and long garlands were woven for the arbor.

"Won't you come and help us make the wreaths?" Eleanor asked Jessie.

"I should like to," she answered, "but mamma said I was to come right home as soon as we got back from the woods. I have had a lovely time,

and I'd like to stay," the child repeated wistfully. "I just love that little pony."

"You shall drive with us whenever you want to," Eleanor assured her, as she bade her good-bye.

Eleanor was very thoughtful all the rest of the day, even when she and Rock and Florence were busy over the crown for the May-queen to wear the following day.

"We'll keep some of the prettiest bunches to trim our dresses with," said Florence. "Bubbles, bring us a basin of water to put them in. I shall have a little bunch on each shoulder and you can have the same, Dimple. Oh, where did you get those lovely lilies of the valley?"

"Mr. Atkinson sent them to me. I met him on the street and he was asking me about the May party."

"Where are they going to set up the May-pole?" Rock asked.

"Just back of Mr. Atkinson's; in that pretty meadow with the grove at one end."

"What a lovely place!" exclaimed Florence. "Where are you going, Dimple?"

"I'm just going to speak to mamma." And a

moment later she entered her mother's room with a very serious face.

"What is the matter with the May-queen?" her mother asked.

Two tears started to Eleanor's eyes and she hid her head on her mother's shoulder. "I want to be May-queen so much," she said in a stifled voice.

"Well, dearie, I don't see anything to grieve you in that."

"Do you think I ought to give up to Florence or Jessie? It seems mean not to give them the chance."

Her mother smiled. "I don't think you are called upon to do anything of the kind. You were chosen fairly by the class, and you have no more right to refuse than if a presidential candidate were to say: 'Mr. So-and-so wants so much to be president. I'll give my place to him.' It is very kind of my little girl to think of such a thing, but I don't think it would do. Let the matter rest as it is. Every one will have a good time, and next year, or upon some other occasion, perhaps Jessie will have another chance."

"But Florence won't."

"Maybe she will. We might have a May party of our own next year in Florence's honor, and then she could be queen and Jessie maid of honor, if that would do."

"Oh, mamma, that is a lovely plan for you to think of, I feel real comfortable now."

And, therefore, with not a cloud to mar their pleasure the children started off for the May party. The little pony, which they had named Spice, wore a garland around his neck, and when Eleanor, dressed in white, with her maid of honor by her side, appeared in the little flower-decked pony-cart, a shout arose from the children, and with one accord they began to sing "God save the Queen."

Then Eleanor was helped down by two of her gentlemen-in-waiting, and was conducted to her throne; her crown was placed upon her head and her sceptre in her hand. Then a merry, merry time they had dancing around the May-pole, weaving in and out with their many-hued ribbons. The lookers-on in Mr. Atkinson's garden said it was the prettiest sight the town had seen in a long time.

After this they played games and sang songs

and romped and ran and searched the woods for wild flowers till it was time for feasting.

When each basket was opened a store of good things appeared; these were spread out upon the grass, and the little queen was served first. But as she was eating her ice cream, she saw a pair of sparkling black eyes peeping through the fence. "Oh, there is Bubbles," she exclaimed. "Poor little Bubbles."

"What is your Royal Highness' wish concerning her?" asked Rock with quick wit, as he dropped upon one knee. "Is it yon sable maiden who has attracted your Majesty's notice?"

"Yes, it is. I wish she could have some of these good things."

"Where is the Premier?" asked Rock. "Oh, there she is. Miss Reese, her Majesty, the Queen, desires a consultation." And Miss Reese came forward.

"There is Bubbles," the queen said in very familiar language. "Please, Miss Reese, can some one take her some ice cream and cake? Is there enough?"

"An abundance. I will see that she has some," was the reply.

"May it please your Majesty, I will undertake the errand," said Rock. "Do you send me in quest of the hand-maid who has found favor in your sight?" Rock's language was a funny mixture of courtly and Scriptural expressions.

"Yes, do go, Rock, there's a dear." And Bubbles was made supremely happy by a generously piled up plate of cake and ice cream.

For some reason Don had taken a sudden liking to Rock, in spite of the latter's snubs and his coolness toward him. Rock was a bright boy with a ready wit and much ingenuity, and Don, with the admiration a small boy so often feels for a larger one, followed him around upon this May day until Rock, at first annoyed, was finally sorry for the smaller boy and began to pay him some attention, and to Eleanor's surprise, she saw the two hobnobbing like old friends before the day was out.

Whether it was on Rock's account or not, it is true that when the queen's chariot, as Rock called it, was driven up for Eleanor and Florence, no one was louder in his cheers than Don, and despite the old grievances, Eleanor could not help being pleased by this evidence of Don's good-

will, and she drove off as happy as a little girl could be, followed by shouts of "Long live Queen Eleanor!" Spice shaking his mane and evidently in high feather at such a frolic.

"Has my dear daughter had a happy day?" asked Eleanor's mother as she kissed her good-night.

"So happy, mamma." There was little pause, then Eleanor said: "Don has to pick strawberries all day Saturday, for Mr. Snyder, and Rock is going to help him. May Florence and Bubbles and I go too? We can take Jessie and get through a lot."

"I cannot allow you to pick berries all day, dear, but you may spend a part of the afternoon in that way if you want to. Rock can do as he chooses, of course, but, how comes it that you are asking permission for Bubbles?"

"Don likes us all now," returned the child, "and Bubbles says if we pick for him, why, she will too, but I don't believe Olive will ever care for any of us."

"Perhaps she will. If one goes right along and does the best she knows how, after a while even her enemies will see her as she really is.

What do you think Cousin Ellen said to me today when we stood together in Mr. Atkinson's garden looking at the May party?"

"I don't know. What did she say, mamma?"

"She said: 'Eleanor makes a very sweet little queen, doesn't she?'"

"Oh, mamma, truly?"

"Yes, truly. I think Mr. Snyder and Doctor Sullivan and—Don, perhaps, have had something to do with her change of opinion. At all events, we may hope that even Olive will be friends with you yet."

Eleanor shook her head, but just then Florence called, "Queen Eleanor, your Majesty, aren't you ever coming to bed? What makes you stay so long?"

"'Cause I'm so happy," answered Eleanor, after a last "Good-night!"